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Nov 1941



THE HEIR OF SHERBURNE

SHERBURNE HOUSE.

LYNDELL SHERBURNE.

SHERBURNE COUSINS.

A SHERBURNE ROMANCE.

THE MISTRESS OF SHERBURNE.

THE CHILDREN AT SHERBURNE HOUSE.

SHERBURNE GIRLS.

THE HEIR OF SHERBURNE.

THE HEIR OF SHERBURNE

BY

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GRANDON'S HONOR," "LARRY," ETC.



NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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TO

SADIE M. COMPTON.

There are terraces to life—Childhood, Youth,
Womanhood, and then a long garden-walk
wherein we gather what other hands have
sown, and plant anew for those who shall come
after us.

A. M. D.

NEWARK, 1899.

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THE HEIR OF SHERBURNE.

CHAPTER I.

AN OUTGROWING.

WHEN Gertrude Maurice stepped out of the handsomely appointed train on the main-line, and after half an hour's tedious waiting, entered the second-rate branch line, the whole world seemed to change to her. She had kept up her delusion as long as possible. The well-dressed, prosperous looking people, the middle-aged women with an air of good breeding and knowledge of the world, the young women with the aspect of being satisfactorily settled in life, the buds of one or two seasons who had not yet left off their winsome smiles; men of conscious experience, young fellows radiating a society atmosphere of exclusiveness, and other young fellows plain and happy, starting on a summer vacation.

What a different aspect this way train presented. The green plush was dingy and faded. There were not many passengers at this hour. Several women with unruly children, country-looking men who stared about vacantly, a few showily gowned girls with unmodulated voices, and an air of having had a good time somewhere, and willing the rest of the world should know it and envy them.

Gertrude had a seat to herself. She put her satchel beside her, piled up her papers, glanced around and was glad she did not know any one, then settled in a delicate, leisurely fashion. The summer was over. That kind of delightful experience was ended for her. She was going back to common life, very common it looked to her. If she could run away and drop out of both worlds—her world of nineteen years, and the great future world—she was quite sure, with the unreason of youth, life could never hold so felicitous an episode again.

For she had hovered on the borders of an enchanted land, and glanced at a love that might have been hers, a love such as she had never dreamed would come into her life, had understood by some sudden prescience how to win it. A raising of the eyes in mute appeal, a clasp of the hand, a sentence begun in haste and broken off with a blush, a quick acceptance of a proffer of sympathy that had just back of it another meaning. A happy, restful life for all the years to come!

She had not made the sign. She wished Mr. Murray knew the exact motive that had hurried her quick negative to his half-asking. If it had been a little more definite, if he had not treated her anxiety to find a standing place in the world with that—yes, it was indifference! His idea of a woman's sphere was a graceful willow chair on a veranda, and brightness enough to be entertaining. Well—truth to tell, her ambition was not much higher. Princess Beaumanoir had aims, Violet Osborne was a genius, but she could be content with a pleasant life. Yet in many things she could attain to the standard of these Sherburne and Beaumanoir people. And she wished he could understand the delicacy that had kept her from reaching out for the prize she coveted, the pride and

delicacy she had flaunted in the face of Princess Beaumanoir.

The train stopped. The sleepy little town looked drowsier than when she had left it. There were a few idlers about the station, and two of them nodded to her, which brought a flush of indignation to her cheek.

Two girls were coming along the street. This was the passenger side. The other led down to the business portion of the town.

"O Gertie!" A tall girl with an unformed figure and extremely youthful face gave her an enthusiastic embrace.

Her companion was shorter, more womanly and sedate.

"O Lu! O Agnes!"

"Hasn't it been splendid! And how you stayed! Mother was quite sure when you wrote about that club."

"Don't talk nonsense, Lu," commanded the elder in an authoritative tone. "How well you look, Gertrude. We have enjoyed the letters so much. It was almost like an outing for all of us."

"I'd a hundred times rather had the real thing," interposed Lu.

"O, my trunk. I must go back with the check."

"Never mind. We will send 'Lonzo down with the wheelbarrow and save half the charge."

It had come to the reign of small economies again.

They turned away from the station, away from the river as well. Lu took the satchel. It had a flavor of the coast of Maine and traveling.

The plain little town and the houses had grown old together. There were wide shaded streets with grassy edges to the sidewalks paved with planks. Gardens and fruit-trees, and beyond farms and woodlands.

Gertrude surveyed her sisters half sorrowfully, half critically. Agnes' yellow-grey stuff gown was most unbecoming. Her sailor hat, black, with a black ribbon was rather dingy, stiff and ugly. Lu looked better in her cambric frock that was not quite long, though she had surreptitiously let it down. "Two grown girls were enough," Mrs. Maurice said, "and one of them must be married before Lu could leave girlhood."

"I wouldn't mind if I wasn't such a Maypole," grumbled Lu, complainingly. Agnes had been grown up since she was twelve years old.

"Everybody is well," commented Gertrude.

"O yes, though poor father doesn't seem quite up to the mark; I wish he could have a holiday, but we really can't afford it. Elsie has had the measles—very light. Elsie and Virgie have never had the mumps, and there have been several cases. I dare say they will get it as soon as school begins. It is a pity they could not have had it in vacation."

"Mumps and measles for a welcome home," giggled Lu. Gertie laughed as well. How ridiculous it was!

"Of course we are delighted to get you back, but it did not seem as strange as if you had not been away at school. And we were so interested in your nice trip. It was very good of your friends to lengthen out the pleasure, and your letters *were* a treat."

Agnes' dull face brightened. Gertrude was right when she said there was not a handsome one among the five girls. She had a certain piquancy with her purplish eyes and fair hair, but her complexion was many shades too dark. Agnes seemed all of one color. Her hair was a soft, dead brown, her eyes a light brown. Lu was much fairer, with a chestnut tinge to her hair, but freckled,

which made her look sallow. And she did hate freckles so!

"There is no adjective that would do the outing any justice," said Gertrude, with a long inspiration. "O, I wish you all could have been there!"

"Father and everybody?" Lu giggled again.

Gertrude swallowed hard to keep the scarlet out of her face. Did money make all this difference?

"I wish we had a lot of relations," began Lu. "And we haven't one cousin. All that crowd were cousins, weren't they? And it must be just splendid to have so much money! I suppose they are all as rich as Aunt Sampson? Well, you have made some elegant friends, Gertrude Maurice."

And she—Gertrude had stepped out of this charmed circle forever. There would be a gulf between her and Princess Beaumanoir, who had been the moving spirit of the golden summer.

A neighbor met them, full of cordial curiosity. "What was Maine like? And Yankee people? Was New York any grander than Philadelphia, for all the talk? She hoped to get to Philadelphia before she died. And Susie went to Cape May. Marty's husband took her along with them. You must come over and compare notes about your journeys."

Gertrude nodded smilingly.

They walked up a path bordered by tall dahlias. An old-fashioned, one-story and a half house, with a wide porch, overhung by a dilapidated shingle roof. A small, delicate, middle-aged woman sat in a splint rocker mending some thread lace, a souvenir of her youth. She did not rise, but glanced up in a dignified manner. Gertrude bent over and kissed her.

She examined the girl minutely. Then she cleared her throat with a delicate sound that she considered impressive.

"You have improved in style," she said, graciously. "I am glad you have had such an excellent opportunity, and I do hope you have improved that also. I wonder they did not keep you in New York awhile. There are so many more chances for society."

Gertrude went through the wide hall with its painted floor, and up the worn stairs. There were four rooms below and a summer kitchen; four chambers upstairs with sloping roof and with windows in the end. She and Agnes shared the same room. There was a large, old-fashioned, high-post bedstead that reached down to the slant in the ceiling. A bureau, a dressing-table, a lounge, fashioned and covered by the deft hands of the second daughter, some engravings, curiously framed, one in beautiful silvery grey lichen. The old chairs had chintz covers and looked inviting.

"O, Agnes, how you would have liked Robin's Point and the house. It seems a shame for me to have had it all!" in a passionate, half-regretful tone. "And you have just stayed here and drudged!"

Gertrude clasped her arms around her sister in remorseful tenderness, and kissed the flushed cheek.

"No, I do not call it drudging; I like it," and the face brightened. "And I have been furbishing up the parlor. Mr. Rowdon made me a frame for that St. Agnes you brought home and I covered it with a strip of that wine-colored poplin, and you can't think how beautiful it looks. He made a new little table and we have oiled and polished it until you would think it fresh from a store. And I have covered the old rocker with some new, pretty

cretonne in wood colors and yellow, with glints of red. Mother hated dreadfully to have the brocade covered up, but I like fresh, clean chintz better than pretentious rags."

"What a treasure you are to a home, Agnes! I take all the good things and do nothing in return. But when the trunk comes I have some remembrances you will enjoy. I did not forget you with all the good times."

"I suppose those people are all very rich."

Agnes sighed at the end of her question, but there was no envy in it.

"Yes. But they are the kind of people you never connect with money. I suppose it is because they are so accustomed to it and their wants are all gratified before they are hardly wants. It is a delightful way to live. If Aunt Sampson had been like any of them!"

"I must go down and look after the supper. And there come Virgie and Elsie. O, I must send 'Lonzo for the trunk."

'Lonzo was a big shambling fellow who gardened and did chores for the neighbors.

Gertrude freshened herself up a bit, brushed her hair and put on a clean shirt waist she found in the drawer. Then she went down and was almost smothered with a double greeting from the two who had not yet arrived at the dignity of "teens."

After that her father, who shook hands cordially and looked her all over, then asked if he could have supper right away, as he had to go down to Gregory's and make an estimate on some lumber.

So they had supper and the trunk came. There was a painting by Violet Osborne, a group of the four girls, photographs of the children, books, rare shells, a sash

for Lu, some pretty goods for waists, ribbons, lace and chiffon.

"I'd rather have had a silk frock than all the stuff," declared Lu, disdainfully.

"These were gifts of friendship," replied Gertrude, with spirit. "I was fed and entertained, but there was no bargain about my being clothed."

"Gertrude, do not take your sister up in that sharp fashion," said her mother, fretfully. "I have known people who did even *that* for a guest. It isn't such an uncommon thing."

"There are some letters for Gertie," said Agnes, coming in, though she had heard her mother's rather shrill voice in the little kitchen. It was soft in its lower tones, indolent, but when she was not pleased, and raised it a little, it lost its pleasant sound.

"O yes, three!" exclaimed Virgie. "I brought one in this morning. I put them on the tray——"

"I took them in my room. They are—but it can't make any difference to-night. And really, you ought to tell us about your visit and the people you met. Was that club composed of men, alone? But of course there were plenty of married women to matronize you all. Are those other girls in society?"

"O no. They are going back to school."

"Then, Gertrude, I think you ought to have done something for yourself. There are so many of you girls, and your poor father has his hands full. I don't know what would become of you all if anything should happen to him. And *you* have had the best of everything. You are like your father, you never can see a golden opportunity."

"I'll have to earn my golden opportunities myself, I

am afraid," responded Gertrude, with a tremolo in her voice that was meant to do duty for a half laugh. "I have not the beauty to captivate people off-hand. And everybody seemed to think more of fun and dancing than sentiment."

"Some of the most successful women have not been handsome. I remember when I was young there was one girl who had only to raise her finger and men would flock to her. And she was very plain. I'm sure I don't see why you should all take after your father and the Sampson tribe——"

"The Maurice tribe it must have been," interposed Lu, with her giggle. "Aunt Sampson claims that she was a handsome young woman, and she was thirty-five when she married. Goodness me! Even at that rate Gertie would have sixteen years' grace."

"Luella, I would try and cultivate a little sense," said her mother, sharply. "I hope none of you will ever live to know the trial of a family of girls. And if Gertrude had been a boy the family fortunes would have been assured."

There was a step on the porch, and a figure loomed in the half-light. Agnes held up her hand suddenly to her mother, who turned and confronted Mr. Rowdon.

"So the truant has returned. Why, Gertrude, how blooming you look, and sunburned! A good healthy color, and your eyes shine like beads. I suppose the young sparks you have been with would say stars or something, but I'm a plain, old-fashioned fellow, and say the first thing that pops into my head! Had a first-class time, I s'pose. I dare say you will hardly be able to get back to the level of us common folks."

Such unstudied remarks made it difficult for Mrs.

Maurice to smile on her prospective son-in-law. Gertie *did* deserve something higher after all her education. She was prepared with many little snubs if the eldest daughter had returned with an engagement ring on her finger, but she had not, and the mother refrained from motives of policy.

They all went out on the porch. There was a long bench under the windows. Gertrude slipped into the end seat, and had her arm around little Elsie, so she was flanked on both sides. Mr. Rowdon took the big armchair and began to question Gertrude in a rather jocose way. There were many entertaining things to say of course, and she exerted herself to cover the whole ground, which she did until her father returned. Agnes had finished with the dishes and came out.

"Lu," Gertie whispered, "go in mother's room and get those letters, won't you, please?"

She returned presently with two of them.

"I can't find the other one," she said. "These laid on mother's bureau. The other had a sort of bluish envelope, and was sealed with wax, and just said in the corner return to some place, Philadelphia."

The two were from the school agency. Elsie had dropped asleep on her sister's arm. She was a slim little thing, small for her ten years.

"I'll take her to bed," said Gertrude, glad of an excuse to get away.

When she had her little sister safely consigned to her pillow, and asleep in an instant, she opened her letters. One was from a Western boarding-school recently started. In return for teaching numerous English branches, while the salary was low, there would be compensating advantages in pursuing the studies of music, French, German,

and some collegiate branches. The other wanted everything, experience and a college degree, with a salary of twenty dollars per month and board.

"I couldn't fill that, and no doubt I should get half starved in the other place," mused the girl. "I have let the chance for governess slip, and it does seem as if no one in the world really wanted me. To spend thirty or forty dollars going West, and then perhaps be stranded ——"

Had she been a foolish girl to let a little scruple of pride and honor interfere when she might have been the wife of a charming and attractive man, and—yes, in spite of the years between she could have loved him very dearly. She buried her face in the pillow and felt the overflow of tears. She was miserable after all her happy summer. Perhaps if she had stayed at home she would never have known—but she knew now what love could be like. She had made a tremendous sacrifice with the wastefulness of youth, and there was no approving conscience to sustain her. She might as well have been happy and prosperous and beloved. O, was she quite sure Constantine Murray truly loved her and had not been amusing himself? Ah, that was the sting, the half doubt. But if she had accepted him it would all have been settled and she knew he would have proven the very soul of honor.

"Gertrude, mother wants you to come downstairs," was the peremptory summons from Luella. "Whatever have you been doing up here this ever so long?"

She went down without a word. Virginia sat by the dining-table reading. Her father had excused himself and retired; he was always fatigued when night came.

"Mr. Rowdon wants to hear about your journey, Ger-

trude," her mother began in an amiable tone that to her ear had a smothered anger in it.

"Yes, you might about as well say Europe to me as Maine," announced that gentleman. "I've had an idea all along that it was up northeast, and freezing cold ten months of the year, with miles and miles of pine barrens and timber of various sorts. The idea of any one going off there when there was Cape May and Atlantic City, and Long Branch if you want to go north, and all Delaware and Maryland shore. But I declare, I said to Agnes, your letters beat me all out. You were not drawing on your imagination now, were you?"

"The half has not been told," Gertrude began with an effort at gayety. "You see the world is so large and there are a great many people in it. They search for pleasure as well as gold and diamonds. They go up to Alaska and over to Africa, so why shouldn't those who do not care so much for the gold and diamonds have the pleasure?"

"Well—I s'pose it must be pleasure to them, but I don't believe I'd care for it. And you mean to say that Maine is like—like ——"

"It is beautiful, all the long coast dotted with islands and bays and points and vessels of every kind, yachts in gala array, steamboats flying to and fro, fishing boats, until it looks as if half the world had gathered there on a picnic. And Mount Desert Island is just full of society people with hotels and cottages."

"Well! well! I can't get over it. I've always stayed at home, though I did once go to New York, but everything seemed dreadful high, and Maria, she thought 'twas such an awful wicked city. But she wouldn't even go to Philadelphia. I think Maria did get to be awful

close in those last years. And I've about made up my mind to enjoy life, but I don't believe I want to go galling' around in strange places very much. A good home is about my idea of comfort."

"A good home is an excellent thing for a man, and especially for a woman. Parents die and old homes must be broken up, so it is wisdom to form the new ones. I have no patience with the new education of girls that makes them clerks and telegraph operators and what not, and leaves them utterly incompetent to manage a home. I mean that my girls shall know how to make the men they marry happy and comfortable."

"Very good, Mrs. Maurice. Excellent," and he rubbed his hands together. "Comfortable, that's the word. Now Maria was a first-rate housekeeper, a little close in some things, but I don't really think she understood comfort. Of course I couldn't get along for steady company with that Betsey Young, but then I don't mean to ;" and he gave a soft chuckle.

"O no, of course not," said Mrs. Maurice, breaking the rather long silence with an air of conscious knowledge.

"I don't s'pose there is much raised in the way of farming and garden stuff up there in Maine? And the winters must be just fearful."

This was addressed to Gertrude.

"I shouldn't care to spend a winter on the coast, though the natives do not complain. The winter storms must be magnificent."

"I guess we'll keep to our own tight little Delaware. We have some pretty fine storms for people who enjoy such things. But I have heard that sailors were not really fond of storms."

The conversation languished and Agnes came to its assistance. Mr. Rowdon dropped into a silence unusual for him. He glanced first at one girl, then at the other. Every moment Gertrude seemed more of a stranger to him, and there was a dawning sense of discomfort. His summer had been very pleasant. He had considered himself in some sense half or more engaged to Gertrude. Her parents looked favorably on his suit. It had taken her by surprise and she had said—well, he couldn't quite recall whether she had declined his proposal, or had it under consideration, as her mother delicately put the fact. With such a houseful of girls he had an idea any of them would be ready to marry at a good opportunity since there was nothing more to expect from this queer old rich aunt whose annuity would die with her. But he had a feeling now that Agnes would make a man much more comfortable. He felt so friendly and at ease with her. She was an excellent housekeeper, too.

The French clock on the parlor mantel chimed out the half-hour. People in the small town were primitive in their habits. He would have a little walk, a look around to see that things inside and out were safe, and he liked to be in bed by ten o'clock. So he rose and said good-night.

Mrs. Maurice retired to her room in a dignified manner. She would plan her talk with Gertrude the next morning, and if there was any fancy or any opportunity she would be sure to find it out. She prided herself upon her penetration, and as is often the case she had very little.

Agnes went out to the kitchen to arrange a few matters for morning, and then they trooped upstairs. How bright and cheerful she was !

"Don't you think Mr. Rowdon has improved wonderfully?" she asked, with an eager smile. "You know we used to laugh at his peculiarities, and father said they just hated his skimping ways at the yard. But I do think it was Miss Maria's influence. He has built a pretty porch on two sides of his house, and he is talking of putting in a bow-window. And you would hardly believe how fond he is of nice little things. He is growing quite ambitious to be like other folks."

Gertrude yawned and began to take down her hair. What had inspired this praise?

"I expect you are just tired out. We won't talk another bit, for there will be all to-morrow."

"Agnes, no one half appreciates your goodness. I have accepted all your sacrifices without a thought and made no return. I am a selfish heathen!"

"I don't know as there has been much real sacrifice," and one could almost feel the smile that inspired the cheery tone. It pricked the elder's heart. "I have quite trained Lu in some housekeeping ways this summer, and if you had been home she would not have seen the necessity of taking hold."

"O I wish ——"

There was a silence, and Agnes knelt down to say her brief prayer. What did she, Gertrude, wish? All manner of impossible things. They haunted her pillow after the lights were out, and even when Agnes was drawing the long, regular inspirations of slumber. Why had fate sent Aunt Sampson with her promising proposals that turned to dry ashes in their fruition? For if she had never gone away from home and been content with her surroundings and—yes—married and spent an equable humdrum life instead of feeling capable of something

higher and wider and truer, and never being able to reach it! She had hoped the summer would lead to a certain possibility, not an engagement of marriage, but a way to earn her own living and a little beside. There were girls and women doing it cheerfully, honorably. O, how did they find standing-room?

She tormented herself with the everlasting questions that youth so often fights through, to find them unanswerable until the light of experience is turned upon them, sometimes too late to be of real service. Yet all experience strengthens and enriches unless it be bitter indeed. But just now she could not see any real purpose in the golden summer, that had raised her above the petty round. Perhaps her mother was right, she had not made the most of her advantages.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT THE MORNING BROUGHT.

WHEN Gertrude Maurice came downstairs the next morning, Agnes and her father were sitting over a cozy breakfast. He nodded a welcome.

"You see Agnes has taken good care of your admirer," he said, jocosely. "Why the whole town is talking of the change in him. Old maids ought never be allowed to boss a family. If Maria Rowdon had lived he would just have grown queerer and queerer, and now he's getting so sensible and reasonable they're 'most sorry down to the yard that they pushed him out. Tom Lindsley wants him to start again with him, but there isn't business enough in this town for two firms. You girls try to persuade him out of it."

He gave Gertrude a meaning look as he rose and took his hat. Lu entered the room at the same instant, and the two younger girls came straggling along sleepily.

Agnes made some toast and poured a cup of coffee and asked Lu to take it in to her mother, who never rose until later in the morning.

Gertrude felt as if a net was being drawn about her. There was a curious constriction in her throat. Had all other opportunities failed that she might see clearly that this was her duty? What really made duty? Must one thrust aside the longing for something higher and be content with second best? O, surely not in marriage!

"Here's that other letter," exclaimed Lu. "It had dropped down behind the lace box on mamma's bureau."

There was something about the missive that appealed at once to Gertrude. The envelope was a delicate grey in tint, and in spite of its journey with all sorts and conditions of mail matter, it had preserved an intangible suggestion of fragrance. Then too, it was sealed with wax, and it had a New York postmark. Her heart was up in her throat. O what a silly girl! She opened it resolutely and read it over the second time before she could grasp its meaning, and then she gave a long sigh of delight.

"O girls—listen. This is splendid! A lady who travels a great deal wants a secretary who can write a good hand, answer a letter, read aloud, copy, and make herself useful. And Mrs. St. John recommended me. Wasn't it lovely in her? But—see here. She came to Philadelphia,—last evening it must have been, and asks me to meet her any time after twelve, to-day. O, I shall have to get ready at once. The noon train would make me too late."

"Let me see." Agnes held out her hand for the letter. Gertrude gave it unhesitatingly.

"Wouldn't it be queer if it was something satisfactory? I like the writing and the wording. And—if I *should* suit ——"

"Would you go?" asked Agnes.

"Why, of course. It would be ever so much more agreeable than teaching, which I should always despise. And Mrs. St. John would not endorse anything that was not proper and right."

"And to travel!" cried Lu. "Well, you do drop

down on beds of clover. First going to school, then going to Maine, and now—well you may go to Europe.”

Gertrude smiled a little. There had been some thorns in the clover beds.

“I must go and get ready. O, there is mamma.”

“I’ll take the note in and tell her. You think you *must* go, Gertie?” There was hesitation in look and tone.

“It is a matter of life—liberty and pursuit of happiness. O, Agnes, how good you are !”

She gave her a fond squeeze and kissed her warmly. The Maurice girls rarely kissed out of pure gratitude or tenderness, merely from a sense of duty.

Gertie flew upstairs and rearranged her hair, took some faded flowers out of her hat and put in a black velvet bow, considered her frocks and thought the brown cloth the most business-y. She had some fresh brown gloves. How hard it was always to be thinking about your clothes !

Agnes came up.

“Mother is very much opposed to your going,” she began, but her tone was not discouraging. “You may not suit, and you may not like this Mrs. Townsend, and anyhow you will come back by evening. Gertie—there is another question to decide.”

“I have decided. O, don’t talk it over now, I cannot hear a word about it,” and her tone was a beseeching protest.

“It will be as well to put on your hat before you go in to mamma. Don’t ruffle her any more than you can help. I suppose twenty or thirty years ago girls and family relations *were* different, and you know, Gertie, how bitter mamma feels about girls going out in the

world to do anything. I should be frightened to death. I'd rather scrub floors and cook and iron—but you *are* different. And you know more about outside matters."

There was a scene in "mamma's room." She was in a pretty white morning gown, with yards and yards of sheer ruffling, for she despised cheap laces. And she wished Mr. Maurice was at home to forbid Gertrude going on this wild escapade to a strange city, alone, and meeting a stranger she knew nothing about, who might have some deep laid scheme to entrap her. And this plan of seeking her fortune like any runaway boy was detestable and shameful!

"But I went up to New York and nothing happened to me. And I have gone to school alone. Mamma, the world is so different from your idea of it, and with my education I ought to do something, when there are so many of us."

"You can marry," said the mother, with withering emphasis. "Neither your father nor I will ever consent to your going about the world with a strange woman."

There was no further time for discussion. Gertrude began to put on her gloves and said she would return before dark, trying to get the same train in which she came home yesterday. Mrs. Maurice went into a hysteric, and Agnes came to console her.

Gertie hurried onward. Just before she reached the station she encountered Mr. Rowdon.

There was a brief explanation. "If I should suit, I shall accept this position," announced Miss Maurice, decisively.

The man stared a little. The train was not in and he stepped up on the platform with her.

"Let us walk down here," he began. "Gertrude,

you know I asked you to marry me early in the summer. I'm not one to back out. No one can bring it up against me that I don't keep my word. You were not sure then ——"

"O yes," she interrupted. "You know I told you ——"

"But you might have changed your mind. There's an old song that used to be sung when I was a young fellow, 'Absence makes the heart grow fonder. . . .' I wouldn't have thought of saying a word to any one else, until you were here to take me, or leave me alone ——"

"I should not make the kind of wife you need," she replied with a kindliness that swept over her like a wave of respect for him, that she had never experienced before. He certainly had a nice sense of honor if it was expressed in a brief business-like manner.

"You can marry some woman who will study your happiness, who will make the kind of home *you* like. I should be restless and discontented and want a hundred things you care nothing about. So you are very wise to think no more of the matter. I am glad we had this talk so soon, and now we will consider the subject settled."

"Settled. Yes. You see I was a bit hasty. You were the oldest, and your father will be relieved to have some of you settled in life. He's had a rather hard tug while the rest of us have made the money. And I've liked you girls ——"

The train shrieked in the distance.

"We shall always be very friendly, I am sure. And I do hope you will be happy."

"You have no hard feelings about it?"

"O no, no;" with a decisive smile.

He put her on the train rather awkwardly—he never had been a ladies' man. But there was a touch of honesty and earnestness about him and a desire to do his best, to meet the standard of others rather than compel them to the usages of his hitherto narrow and indifferent life.

Gertrude Maurice dropped into her seat and laughed in a half-hysterical fashion, that was hardly amusement. She had been politely, kindly given up, when she had been anticipating a scene from the very obtuseness of the man's nature. Did he know he loved Agnes?

Would Agnes marry him? She was younger—oh how many years there would be between them! Yet Agnes was not young. When it came to that, she really was more experienced, better balanced, a better housekeeper and manager than mamma. For three years she really had been the head of the working household. Ah, how could any young girl give up all her youthful life. People *were* very different. But what an odd ending to her first marriage proposal!

Then she speculated upon what Mrs. Townsend could be like. There were stories about the trials of companions whose positions were little better than that of a maid, and before she reached her journey's end her courage and hopes had fallen considerably. She took the car her letter had mentioned and stopped at the corner. The hotel was a few doors up; a rather plain, unostentatious place. She was shown to the reception-room, and sent her card to Mrs. Townsend. And a moment or two later a tall, fine-looking woman, with snowy-white, wavy hair, and peachy pink cheeks, who carried herself with a grand air that was far removed from haughtiness, crossed the room and held out her hand cordially.

"Miss Maurice, I am glad to see you so prompt. Business will do one thing for women, and that will be to make them consider the value of time, and the necessity of meeting an engagement at the appointed hour. Come up to my room. We will have a little lunch there and talk over the prospect."

The voice had an inspiring sound. The ample figure, finely proportioned, the smiling, spirited face, and the indescribable something that was good breeding, familiarity with society, and the fine art of pleasing combined, made Mrs. Townsend a charming person. Gertrude felt fascinated and was a little frightened as well.

"You graduated at Kingsley Hall," she began. "As it is not a college, I suppose you do not know everything?"

"O no. Indeed the answer to some applications I received from schools, convinced me that I knew very little, even if I was on the honor roll."

"I do not want a secretary who knows more than I do myself;" and the lady gave a piquant smile. "I had one who was quite wise, and corrected me and my letters, and my talks. I do not always lecture. I did not enjoy it. In my time girls rarely went to college. But the first and most important question is—have you a lover?"

"No, I have not," returned Gertrude, though she felt her color rise.

"My last year's secretary had a lover. She was thirty-three or four, and I thought entirely safe. But the letters they wrote to each other were perfectly appalling. He was some four or five years younger, not that I object to that, but they seemed to have all the enthusiasm of sixteen. So I decided I would not have an engaged young woman, nor a very pretty one."

"I certainly can fill the requirements on both of those points," said Gertrude, with frank amusement.

"You were very well recommended. In fact I had quite a curiosity to see what you were like."

"It was very kind of Mrs. St. John. I am the eldest of five girls, and my father has only a moderate salary. So I am anxious to do whatever I can."

"Mrs. St. John. O yes," Mrs. Townsend nodded as if with some afterthought. "She considered that you would make a very good secretary. I wanted some one who wrote a plain hand, and who had not much personal vanity. I was extremely gratified on the latter point."

"I have not much to be vain about. I am just ordinary. Perhaps it is the lack of charms, rather than virtue."

The luncheon came in. It was quite a feast with this delightful hostess. Then Mrs. Townsend explained her duties more at length.

"I have so many letters and they are all so much alike that one soon gets used to answering them. They are on subjects that I can't be bothered with, and yet need a reply. Then there are all sorts of begging letters from the poor woman who beseeches you to save her little home from foreclosure, to the young woman who wants you to send her abroad for a musical or an art education."

"Do they ask such things as that of you?" exclaimed Gertrude, in surprise.

Mrs. Townsend laughed. "O, you will find no end of queer things. It will be a liberal education in the high art of soliciting, I assure you. A little experience will teach you to discriminate, and you will soon be able to answer them without consulting me. Then there are invitations and business matters. I shall want you to

look over the newspapers and see what other wise and learned women are doing, and sometimes to cut out items and arrange them so that I shall merely have to glance over them. Then I like to have some one read aloud, sometimes read me to sleep. O it will be no sinecure, I assure you."

"I shall be quite willing to work. It sounds very interesting," and Gertrude's face was alight with earnestness.

"I suppose it will interest at first, but you see you will be expected to work with the same fervor when you are bored, even. And there are callers to entertain. Then—I shall expect a good deal of discretion and reticence on your part. You must learn to talk without saying anything in particular. Indeed, what attracted me in the list of your virtues was that your reticence was especially mentioned."

"Mrs. St. John was very kind. I don't mind saying that I was rather awkwardly placed at school and I learned to keep my own counsel. I was a poor girl among those in good circumstances," and Gertrude flushed. "My father had expected to be heir to a considerable fortune and missed it, so we girls must make our own way in the world."

Mrs. Townsend nodded in a kind of approving fashion. For all her apparent ease she was studying her guest closely.

"I suppose you have not seen much of the world then?"

"I had a lovely time this summer with some girls who were at school. They invited me to share their summering off the coast of Maine. It was delightful beyond description—with their mothers and fathers who were

charming and cultivated people. Do you know of a Mrs. Drayton, who has done a good deal of literary work?"

"O yes, I have met her. She was at one time quite a star but of late years she has settled into domesticity. I like Mr. Drayton. And the philanthropic Carews?"

"They were there, at least Mrs. Carew and the children, and the doctor just at the last. And Mr. and Mrs. Amory."

"The artist and his handsome wife! Why, Miss Maurice, you have been in quite swell society. We shall have some people to discuss when other subjects are worn threadbare. And now since we seem to have finished our lunch, come and write some letters for me."

The letters were satisfactory. Gertrude Maurice was not effusive, and answered some imaginary epistles quite to the point. She proved to be a very good reader. There was a certain frankness and utter absence of straining after effect that pleased Mrs. Townsend.

"Now," said she, "I am going up to New York this evening. I think you will suit me very well, but as you are not of age I will draw up a little agreement that I should like your father to sign. I am due in Chicago the last of the month, then St. Louis, Denver, and so on to California where I shall probably remain three months. I shall not return to New York under a year in all probability, and in that time I do not want to make any change, and you must not have any lovers. I can refer your father to some Washington people, or since you know the Draytons it may be satisfactory?"

"O yes, that would be satisfactory," Gertrude answered, absently. She was overwhelmed with the prospect. And when the salary was mentioned she seemed quite a rich woman in her own eyes. That they all

would consent was beyond any doubt, though her mother would be full of objections, but she smiled inwardly over their flimsiness.

There was not much more time, for Gertrude had to take her train. They parted mutually pleased. The young girl had interested the older woman deeply. She had a little curiosity about another person to serve, as well.

It seemed to Miss Maurice as if she must pinch herself now and then to make sure of her identity. Was she the same girl returning to the sleepy town yesterday, thrusting pleasure and exquisite memories and friendship into one deep, dismal grave! Was she to go to fairy lands that she had never even dreamed of, to have a life interesting beyond measure, and the companionship of such a woman as Mrs. Townsend!

Lu came down to the train.

"O," she cried, "you look as if you had found a bag of gold that had been buried a hundred years and outlawed. It wasn't a fraud, then? Mother was sure the wicked world would swallow you up and we should never see you again. The consolation was that she *had* predicted it."

"It was no fraud but a regular business transaction. Of course, Lu, we are so out of the real world these things seem a little strange to us, but they really are everyday occurrences in the larger cities. I must have gone away if I had found a position to teach; I would a hundred times rather have this. I like Mrs. Townsend. She is a truly splendid woman."

"Where are you going?"

"All over the world—well, the American world, first," laughing gaily. "And oh, suppose I should go abroad

sometimes? I have never truly understood the wisdom of Aunt Sampson sending me away to school, but if I had not gone, this couldn't have happened—indeed I should not have been fitted for the position.”

“O goodness!” ejaculated Lu, her rather limited vocabulary at fault for a proper word. “Well, you do have the luck! When will you have to go?”

“Next week. Mrs. Townsend is going to Chicago first,” was the prompt answer.

“Well, I suppose mother will have to give in this time, but she has been taking on dreadfully. Gertie,” glancing sidewise at her, “could you marry Mr. Rowdon?”

“No, I couldn't. And he knows it now. I told him this morning. He is very well satisfied.”

“He's half in love with Agnes. But he's such an old fellow! I suppose it doesn't matter when you really care about any one. But I'd like to have lots of fun—like the girls you read about in stories. And you'll have a splendid time.”

“There will be a good deal of work to do. Letters to answer, accounts to keep, people to see ——”

“The people are what I'd like.”

“And no doubt many of them will be persistent and disagreeable. Mrs. Carew finds a good many of them. O, Lu, the world isn't all rose color.”

“Well, I wouldn't want it all one color.”

The household was electrified by Gertrude's report of her day's adventure. Mrs. Townsend would have smiled, Mr. Constantine Murray who after all had engineered the under current, would have been amused. He was quite curious and sought his friend at her hotel the next morning.

“I like Miss Maurice very much,” she began. “She has a certain style and dignity, and she isn't pretty,

though she has a curious attractiveness for people who do not consider merely the outside aspect. I have made her promise not to have any lovers for a year. She will be young enough then. She has some bits of youthful cynicism, and some sage, shrewd wisdom that would do credit to forty."

"Your plan is very good if you can keep her to it, and you will be a wonderful woman."

Mrs. Townsend glanced him over with a touch of amusement.

"Con Murray," she said, vivaciously, "I am not going to have you flirt with my secretary, nor tie an imaginary string to her finger that a susceptible girl might dream would be transformed into a wedding ring. I obeyed your request to the letter. We traveled all round Melchias island and never once mentioned you. I think you might be a dangerous man to an inexperienced girl. So you are not to waylay me with any innocent business surprise, and by the time she comes back she will know you are not the only man in the world. I am sincerely obliged to you for your good offices, and she is very grateful to Mrs. St. John. So we have all done our duty and have earned a degree of satisfaction."

He laughed heartily, as he returned —

"You need not fear my poaching on your manor. And there were three other girl guests last summer."

For once in her life Mrs. Maurice found a current in her own household too strong for her to stay with a delicately imperative wave of her small hand. They all talked together, and it did make a din. Mr. Maurice was so surprised and gratified that his daughter should have this opportunity, that he proved recreant to the claims of her elderly admirer.

Mrs. Maurice leaned back in her chair and sighed. They certainly were an ill-bred lot of girls, and she had always set them a most refined example, she was sure. Yet a touch of elation would stir her heart at the thought of Gertrude seeing so much of the world. And she might meet a desirable *parti*, she loved to think in her schoolgirl French now and then—at all events Mrs. Townsend must be a rich woman, since she did not depend on earning money. She, Mrs. Maurice despised women lecturers and women's rights and all that, but she did respect money and position.

"I can't approve of it, Gertrude," she said, severely, later in the evening. "A young girl's place is under her mother's wing until she has a home of her own. And you have no need of this flighty step, for the home is already provided. A girl who begins her life by outraging the customs of good society, finds in the end that she has lost the regard of people of distinction. She seldom marries. I have hoped to see every one of my girls settled in a home of her own, and if the eldest marries, the others are sure to follow. You may not only spoil your own life, but that of your sisters. Still I know my counsel will go for nothing, since your father has ranged himself on the wrong side."

She put her handkerchief to her eyes and gave a little sob.

And Mrs. Carew knew so many fine women who were earning their living. They visited at Mrs. Drayton's lovely house, they held positions of honor and made delightful friendships. She was not going to be a mere factory girl or a lady's maid, but to put her education and training to some use. If Aunt Sampson had taken her as a companion her mother would have made no de-

mur. And Mrs. Townsend was worth a dozen Aunt Sampsons.

But Mr. Maurice signed the agreement for his daughter, and gave her some money for needful attire, which she insisted she should return. Agnes planned with a genius worthy of a higher sphere and assisted with her deft needle. And the days flew by rapidly. Even Mr. Rowdon was interested in the young traveler in a most unlover-like fashion, so friendly indeed that Gertrude admitted that he had improved very much under new auspices.

Mrs. Townsend's note came, enclosing her first month's salary, and appointing the day and train when she would take her up at Wilmington.

So she started away with the light heart of youth and many consolations. It was not quite as if she had never gone from home before. Then they were not a sentimental family; though their mother indulged in varied emotions.

She had wondered a little about the abrupt termination of the summer friendship. She had made her grateful acknowledgments to everybody at parting, and there was no real need of reiterating it. Princess Beaumanoir would come to realize that she, Gertrude, had no designs on Mr. Murray, who would drop out of her life. The girls were all back at school again, and for a moment or two she envied them with the happy homes and delightful relatives, the affection on every side. It did seem a pity to have the bright and winsome friendship of two years and a golden summer end with a dissatisfaction.

People always laughed at schoolgirl friendships later on in life. Perhaps it was just as well that this should end when their way in the future lay so far apart.

CHAPTER III.

A LUNCHEON PARTY.

“**I** THOUGHT I would come,” exclaimed a bright, merry voice. “If you don’t want me I can lunch with the old people.”

Nora Mallory glanced laughingly at the four girls crowded on the window-seat.

“O, we do want you,” declared Violet Osborne, springing up and seizing both hands. “Old people indeed ! You had better not say that to Aunt Millicent.”

“Who is a grandmother ! ”

“You shouldn’t have been so old yourself, Cousin Nora,” said Pearl Amory, mischievously. “For after all you are *our* compeer. You should have been just out of school. And here you have a husband and two babies, and you are a real girl after all.”

“Have I the secret of perennial youth ? But as mamma was the oldest of the cousins, so I was the oldest of the second generation of cousins. Come and scold Mr. Mallory. Why I shouldn’t have thought of marrying if he had not put the fascinating notion into my head, and had father Mallory to aid and abet him. Well, must I cross to the other side of the hall ? I hear some discreet women in solemn conclave.”

“No, you must not. Come and talk to us. We are going to have a grand time together. Ruth will be here. I am sorry Kitty Saxton decided not to come—at the

very last moment. O, do you remember Gertrude Maurice?"

"Indeed I do. She was the spice at Robin's Point, and we had every variety of sugar, didn't we, and everything nice!"

"The luncheon, if you please, is given in honor of Miss Maurice, who is quite a traveled young lady. And just think that she and Bertie absolutely ran races and played tag last summer! I am so curious to see her again. You know she dropped out suddenly. Perhaps she thought we didn't care about any one so far grown up while we were still in our green and salad days—schoolgirls. But the only distinction we are to make between ourselves and the elders is that we have one end of the table. We will put you on the between line."

"Thank you. I remember having a girls' luncheon here when my school days were ended. Papa was delightful."

"We were so disappointed that he had to go away," exclaimed Violet. "And then we resolved there should not be any masculines. There were only two and one was uncertain. But Uncle Con begged—didn't he, Princess? and we ruled him out by a strong-minded vote. It was real fun. He even offered to take us to the theatre, which he declared was buying a ticket to the feast."

"You were hard-hearted."

"It was not that we loved Cæsar less—O!" And the girls started with eager looks toward the hall, as the bell was pulled imperatively.

It was simply a messenger with a note for Mrs. Drayton, who read it and passed it over to Mrs. Osborne.

"O, can't they come—when the feast is set?" asked Violet, in mock despair.

The answer was another ring and the guests themselves ; Mrs. Townsend, dignified and attractive at the first glance, and a tall, stylish young lady they could hardly recognize until she smiled, and then they crowded about her.

"It is delightful to see you all again," Miss Maurice said, "and to have you remember me so cordially. *Was* it only last summer we had such a grand time? And now you have all graduated and can make your demand on the world. I hope it will treat you as well as it has treated me, for if you remember, I was not expecting much of it, and you all are entitled to a good deal."

They were all going up the wide stairway, while Mrs. Townsend stopped in the reception-room and sent her hat and gloves away by the maid. Quite a bodyguard, and the smiles went to the newcomer's heart.

"You do look like Gertie Maurice with your hat off," began Pearl. "But you are not so thin, and you have so much dignity, I am half afraid of you."

"I've had to be dignified," and she laughed. "And how odd that you should all be in the city, or that we should have come just at this time. I have had a splendid year ! Ray has changed more than any of you. Ray has grown prettier and taller. And, Ruth, have they taken you into the charmed circle?"

"The loveliest of all things has happened to me," said Ruth, with an eager light in her eyes.

"And to have some unexpectedly nice thing happen to you is as good as a fortune ! I used to wish for a fortune, you know, but now I am well content. But I do believe I owe some one an apology—it must be Princess. I went off in a rather ungrateful manner, although at parting I tried to tell you how much I was indebted to

you all for a rare and delightful summer. And, girls, I want to say that I learned many things in an unconscious way then that have been of great benefit to me. I was so taken by surprise at Mrs. Townsend's offer ; then there were so many things to do, and going out into a new world and being very much engrossed with my duties, I let the time slip by ; and then I thought you might cease to be interested in me. But now, with this heartfelt welcome, I seem convicted of neglect. There, you will think I have learned to make speeches."

Princess glanced up and their eyes met. If there had been any little feeling, it was all over, the cordial look said.

They put Miss Maurice at the end of the table and the girls on each side. Mrs. Kenneth had the other end, and the hostess, Mrs. Drayton, and Mrs. Osborne, were in the middle, opposite each other. The other ladies, Mrs. Beaumanoir and Mrs. Amory, had gone home, but Princess and the girls were to remain until some cousins returned from abroad, who were expected about a week later. All these incidents had paved the way for a meeting of the school friends.

The ladies talked of the happenings in the greater world ; the girls still had the atmosphere of school about them, but it was a gay and changeful atmosphere. Gertie asked what had happened the last year, and if there were some brilliant girls left to do honor to Mrs. St. John another summer ?

"I am afraid we never considered that point," rejoined Violet. "Was it very selfish of us?"

"I suppose you couldn't leave your geniuses behind if you had wanted to."

"I am under the impression that no one really wanted

to. But as they are a part of yourself, and not any school quality, you have the best right to them."

"After all," said Ruth Ensign, gently, "I feel sorry for Mrs. St. John. I never thought of it before, but she must get wonderfully interested in girls, and love them as well. And then they go out of her life and a new set comes in. The work is all to be done over again. I don't believe I should like to have a girls' school. I want to go right on with people."

"Yet the variety is entertaining. And Mrs. St. John is very proud of the success of some of her girls. You go out of your own homes by marriage, if not by business."

"But your mothers still have a right to you," said Nora Mallory, glancing up at hers. "Like Ruth, I should not want to be the head of a girls' school. I have not enough philanthropy."

"That is where we mean to broaden out the next generation," said Mrs. Townsend. "The greatest good to the greatest number."

"O Mrs. Townsend, can't we get married if some nice young man asks us?" inquired Pearl, with such a wistful expression and beseeching tone that everybody laughed.

"I suppose you will marry whether or no. A happy marriage, a sensible marriage is the best thing for any woman. But I am very glad that we have passed the era when marriage was a test of respectability, and that a single life can be made admirable and honorable."

"It's funny to think there is a man somewhere in the world coming to marry you," said Violet, in a low tone to Ray, who sat beside her. "I wonder who of us will be married first?"

"Pearl," was the whispered answer. For it seemed to Ray that no one could resist Pearl's beauty.

"That is not my guess," returned Violet, with a glance wandering down toward Ruth. For it seemed the most natural conclusion that Mrs. Kenneth's half adoption should prefigure relationship.

Miss Maurice was telling some laughable experiences that quenched the flickering light of coming husbands. Mrs. Townsend was really proud of her protégée, who saw the amusing side of life without being satiric. There was an indescribable charm about her the girls felt, and they were really glad she had come back to them almost in a schoolgirl fashion.

They were lingering over the fruit when there was a confusion of voices in the hall, masculine voices, and Mrs. Drayton excused herself.

"O Aunt Millicent!" exclaimed a chorus.

Princess sprang up, and the next instant a tall young fellow had her in his arms. Was it really her brother Sherburne, whom they had not seen for two years!

"Yes, we have had a little luncheon, but we could not wait for style, and fellows after a sea voyage are always ravenous. Can't we come out——"

That was Leonard Beaumanoir's voice. Whether any one said they could or could not, they all marched out; Sherburne Beaumanoir, with his arm around Princess, and the two Baltimore cousins, Ned and Len Beaumanoir. Such a greeting, and such a mingling of voices that it was almost a whirlwind of sound with the exclamations of surprise and the short, gay laughs.

"We were not going to look for you until next week," began Mrs. Drayton.

"We found by taking another line that we could come

three days sooner. And we supposed everybody would be up here or at Aunt Lyndell's. When a chap hasn't seen his own folks for two years ——"

"Hear the ingratitude," exclaimed Leonard. "Ned went out a year ago, and I last winter."

"O fellows don't count beside mothers and sisters," began Sherburne.

"And cousins and aunts ——"

"Let me take you around and introduce you to everybody," said Mrs. Drayton. "Then we will have some fresh fruit and some more plates. There is a cordial and inspiring charm in sitting around a table."

"I wonder if I shall spoil it if I take leave. I really have an engagement."

Mrs. Townsend glanced up at the clock. Mrs. Drayton begged her to remain.

"I am truly sorry, for I should like a talk with these young travelers. I have tried not to have any engagements to interfere with the vacation both Miss Maurice and I have earned by our steady application to business, but this came unexpectedly after I had accepted your invitation, and is important. No, Gertrude," with a graceful wave of her hand, "I am going to leave you with these young people, and I hope you will prove so attractive to them that you may induce them to come in a party to the St. James the very first evening they can be spared. I don't see why you mothers may not be generous and divide your pleasures with us lone women."

The young men looked at her as she stood in all the vigor of handsome middle life, and then at the young girl who had risen and bowing smilingly, sat down again.

Sherburne, with his arms still around his sister, half impelled her toward Gertrude.

"Miss Maurice," he began, "I feel as if we had known each other ages. It began in the fossiliferous period of the coast of Maine. There was a learned professor and a young lad, and the latter wrote such glowing letters, in which everything was considerably mixed, but thanks to evolution we come out right at last, and are transformed into human beings in that most charming period of life, youth. May we shake hands and be friends, though if Bertram were here no doubt I should be relegated at once to the rear."

Gertrude smiled and held out her hand.

"You will have to look to your laurels, Ned," said his brother Leonard, teasingly. "Just think of Sher discoursing learnedly on fossils, and Miss Maurice, I should object to being placed back in the ages."

"Ages are periods shorter or longer. And if you had counted the days, and been disappointed last summer when your respected father decisively refused to let you take a homeward trip and join the merry crew who disported themselves on an enchanted island, it might seem the longer period to you."

The butler had been rearranging the chairs. Sherburne dropped into the one next Miss Maurice. Violet moved and gave her seat to Princess and went to the other side of the table with Leonard Beaumanoir, introducing him to Ruth. Pearl beckoned Cousin Ned to her side and placed him next Mrs. Mallory.

"O Cousin Nora," he exclaimed, "do you remember when we used to dispute as to who had the best right to Grandpapa Beaumanoir? And I can recall your lovely wedding, and how pretty the little maids of honor looked scattering their flowers in your path. Somehow, I think we two boys have not had quite our share of the cousins.

Now that I am going to spend the coming year in the city I hope you won't bar me out."

"But we are not all going to remain here," said Pearl.
"O, I almost wish we were."

Edward glanced around his end of the table.

"It is so long since I have seen you all. Of course I know you live in Washington, Pearl——"

"And Ray is going to Washington. Uncle Archie has a position there, and Aunt Julia is to live with them. Aunt Jue is such a sweet old lady, she seems almost as old as grandmamma. Uncle Stanwood's death was a great blow to her, although she bore it so bravely."

"I am afraid I haven't been very cousinly," said the soft, gentlemanly voice. "I have been so fond of books and study, and there were only two boys of us. And I think—don't laugh at me, Cousin Pearl"—glancing up entreatingly, "but I've always been a little afraid of girls."

Pearl did laugh with a soft deliciousness that was like music.

"And you dropped down on a regular girls' party! We are standing on the dividing line—'Where the brook and river meet.' None of us are full-fledged young ladies. We come in the category of 'sweet girl graduates,' except the one talking so earnestly to Cousin Sherburne. She was in the last year's nest."

Edward looked sharply down to the end of the table. He was quite near-sighted, but he did not always wear glasses. He was still rather thin, and the little touches of precision set so well upon him that they were no detriment. He was not as handsome as Sherburne, though he had a rather fine scholarly face, somewhat too grave for a young fellow.

"And where in the list of cousins does she come in?"

"She isn't in the list at all; but I think she 'would be missed,'" laughingly quoting the Mikado. "She and the girl next to Violet, Ruth Ensign, were our school-mates last year. And Princess, who is always thinking up lovely things—or else it was Uncle Con—O, you must know Uncle Con Murray. He is the most splendid bachelor uncle you can imagine, and is so fond of girls. Like Wordsworth, 'In his capacious heart he loves them all.' And Princess invited some girls to summer with us. Miss Maurice *had* graduated, Ruth and another girl were in our class. And as there was no enchanted island for this summer, Aunt Millicent took pity on us and gave us a luncheon. Miss Ensign is going to live in New York. Mrs. Kenneth has in a fashion adopted her. That is Mrs. Kenneth at the end of the table."

"What a lovely face she has."

"And she is just as lovely within as without. She is truly a King's daughter. We had a delightful week with her in Boston last summer before we went to the island."

"I do think a lot of girls have wonderfully good times," said Edward. "And you never knew a more disappointed fellow than Sherburne because he could not come home for vacation. Uncle Len seems so easy-going, as if you could coax anything out of him, but you can't."

"He is a judge," said Pearl, with mock dignity.

"And Bertram wrote Sher such tantalizing letters. Why the boy would make a good newspaper correspondent. And I found Sher quite in the dumps. He gave me the letters to read, and that is how I came to

know you all better than ever before. But Bert's bright particular seemed to be Miss Maurice. Has some one adopted her?"

"Why yes, in a way. She is Mrs. Townsend's secretary, and has been as far as California with her. Mrs. Townsend is a kind of educational woman, believes in kindergartens and colleges and the improvement of the feminine race generally, and *is* charming. O, you needn't look so doubtful. Some time we are all going to vote."

"Do you really want to?" An expression of distaste passed over his face.

Pearl laughed gaily. What a musical sound it was, and oh, what a dazzle of loveliness swept over every feature.

"Well—how many more are going to Washington? I think I am booked for a position in New York, and if I am left all alone ——"

"Poor boy," patronizingly. "There will be Uncle and Aunt Carew, but their flock are not grown up. And here will be Aunt Millicent, and Uncle Drayton is splendid, and Cousin Nora and Mr. Mallory, and Mrs. Kenneth and the professor ——"

"Bertram's second love. A dangerous rival for Miss Maurice in the young man's affections," said Cousin Ned with a smile.

"He is so nice," declared Pearl. "I am coming to the end of my adjectives, there are so many people. And Miss Ensign who is sweet—is that admissible? and whether there is one left to apply to Miss Maurice—well, piquant will do. There, haven't I described everybody?"

"I am obliged to you."

They were certainly having a gay time at Miss Maurice's end of the table. Sherburne had been peeling oranges in a most elaborate fashion for Miss Maurice and Princess, and cracking nuts, the filberts being of the hard shell variety. Sherburne declared they must have summered and wintered a good many times.

"But they are very sweet," replied Gertrude.

Sherburne detailed his last summer's disappointment graphically, and how his feelings were harrowed up by Bertram's description of everybody and the fun. "And I thought you must be quite a little girl," turning to Gertie.

A quick color flashed up in her face. "I was," she answered with a gay smile, "I climbed rocks, I built bridges with heaps of stones, I think I even made sand pies, I ran races and played tag. It was the last expiring gleam of girlhood. Since then I have been staid, discreet, business-y. But you see it was a girl's summer. There were no young men. The mothers tabooed them utterly."

"Didn't they surprise you as we have to-day?"

"There was one who crept into the Eden—do you remember, Princess? Ward Garrison, Miss Hildreth's cousin."

"And did you all fight over him? O, what was one young man among so many girls?"

"No, we didn't fight. We didn't even pull straws. We went off and spent a few days at the Naumekeag clubhouse where there were plenty of men and few women, and danced and had a good time. We went on a yachting excursion around Mount Desert. You wouldn't believe the coves and bays and headlands could be stretched out to afford so much entertainment. It

was a golden summer and Princess planned it all. I can never forget it."

"You must make out a list of the choice places and I will go up and weep over them."

"Why should you weep?"

"Because I was not there. Because so much sweetness and delight and enjoyment has fallen out of my life. It can never be made up to me."

"That sounds like Uncle Con," said Princess. "And isn't it funny that we wouldn't let him come to-day, because it was a girls' party——"

"And *we* stormed the Eden. Dear Uncle Con, I want to see him, and such hosts of people! I'd like to be divided and subdivided for several hours or have an astral body—five or six of them, and the real body should stay here. You cruel Princess! Were you afraid Uncle Con had not wit and wisdom enough to go round, or that so many girls would quench him utterly? You know Miss Maurice, Princess has a mortgage on Uncle Con. If he should ever fall in love he would have to come to her in the most abject humility and say meekly—'Please'm may I ask this girl to marry me?'"

Princess was scarlet. Her eyes met those of Gertrude and some subtle message flashed from both, and then both laughed to break the spell.

Aunt Millicent had risen and gave her arm to Mrs. Kenneth. The procession stood in the hall, dispersing to library and drawing-room, when another visitor was ushered in. Mr. Constantine Murray came face to face with Sherburne Beaumanoir, who had Princess on one side and Gertrude on the other.

"Upon my word! 'Women were deceivers ever,' Shakespeare slightly amended. What magic brought

these young men across the seas, when you all insisted this was to be a girls' party, and that I, no longer young and dangerous to budding femininity, was not even allowed entrance. And a crowd of young men!"

He was shaking hands heartily with the travelers, and Aunt Milly was explaining, but he insisted that it was a deep laid scheme to defraud him and quoted—" 'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour." But in a moment he really seemed to be the hero of the occasion.

"And I have come with a magnificent barouche and pair to tempt some of you to a Central Park drive. I thought by this time you must begin to weary of unalloyed sweetness."

"O yes," began Aunt Milly, "I will order up our big carriage, and we might send around to the livery for another, and end with an out-of-doors party. There is a little cloudiness that will temper the heat, and a grateful breeze from the south. We will have a really festive day."

The girls were enthusiastic. Mrs. Kenneth said Ruth should join them.

Gertie came over to Mrs. Drayton.

"I am sorry to ask you to excuse me," she began in an entreating tone. "I have some important letters to answer, and there was to be a caller at five. I am not sure Mrs. Townsend will be in, and she has already instructed me what to do in the case. I must thank you for this delightful reunion with the girls. I feel very much honored that you should all remember me so cordially. I have spent many happy hours recalling the joys of last summer, and one of the reasons that drew me to Mrs. Townsend was the fact that she had met you all. We often talked about you. I am sorry to give up the added pleasure, but I feel that I ought. I learned

some useful lessons last summer, for which I wish to thank all you mothers. And I hope nothing will ever happen to impair the friendship with any of you."

Millicent could read the depth of feeling in her tone.

"I am so sorry," she answered; "but we shall count on you on some other occasion. Mrs. Townsend intends to remain in the city for some time. Just now we shall crowd in all that is possible, for no doubt Princess will return with her brother. I am glad you have enjoyed yourself."

There was a general protest against Gertrude's defection, though Mr. Murray was silent.

"I wonder if I can't meet you somewhere?" asked Sherburne. "For I must see Aunt Lyndell if it is not for more than ten minutes. I assured her a month ago that my very first call would be upon her, and here I have been pleasuring ——"

They all felt there was an especial duty in this, although it could have been put off until evening. But he insisted he would not stay long, and would surely rejoin them at the park at any convenient point.

"And I hope you will bear Mrs. Townsend's invitation in mind before the general dispersion," exclaimed Gertrude. "I will beg her to set her time to-morrow, and if it does not suit we will rearrange it."

They all acquiesced enthusiastically.

Miss Maurice uttered her good-bye with a touch of regret. Then they discussed where Sherburne should meet them an hour hence, and he nodded a jaunty adieu.

Gertrude Maurice was walking slowly along. She might have given an hour perhaps, but it would have been harder to leave in the midst of the enjoyable drive. No, this was best. How queer it seemed to take up the

old life just as if there had been no break. And Mr. Murray—

She had come to know that he and Mrs. Townsend were friends. But then that lady knew so many newspaper men, and literary and philanthropic people of all sorts.

There was a hurried step behind her. Something impelled her to turn, and she smiled before she realized that she should have looked dignified, and then it was too late.

“I thought I should catch up with you if you did have the start. But no invidious comparisons are meant. So if you don’t object to a companion ——”

They had reached the corner, where she halted.

“You go in that direction to Doctor Carew’s,” she announced, with a little nod.

“I am going to accompany you to the St. James first, wherever that may be. I have almost forgotten New York. So I depend on your tender mercies to pilot me. Then I shall find my way back to Doctor Carew’s, and take some car afterward that will bear me swiftly to Central Park. Have I not given a concise account of my purpose?”

“But if I said ——”

“You will say nothing disagreeable,” he interrupted. “We shall walk along as amicably as lambs in a clover field, after they have feasted. It was so odd to meet you the first thing, when I had heard so much about you.”

“A big boy’s enthusiasm over some one older than himself, who forgets for the nonce how old she really is. I liked Bertram very much. I wish we had come soon enough to see him again.”

“I suppose it was foolish to care so much about a

boy's letters. But I was awfully disappointed about not coming home. You see father was not so enthusiastic about my going to Germany, so I suppose he thought it would be a good discipline for me to stay until my time was up."

"And was it?"

There was a mischievous suggestion in her tone.

"I suppose it was. Good things are not always pleasant. Yet I don't see why they should not have been made pleasant, for then it would be easier to be good. The friction helps to wear out life."

"Is that German collegiate reasoning?"

"It is my reasoning, fresh from Germany."

Both laughed a little.

"However, it has helped me to make up my mind. I am afraid I shall disappoint father a little. And he is such a comfortable father, too. Do you know, Miss Maurice, that is one of the most fascinating words in the language?"

"What—comfortable?"

"Yes. Think of all it expresses."

"At peace with all men. Surrounded by numerous satisfactions. Happy in your inmost soul."

"Excellent. You could write a dictionary."

"And my genius is expended mostly on accounts, and keeping the run of engagements present and to come for Mrs. Townsend. And here we are at the St. James. May I wish you a pleasant call, and a pleasant drive afterward, and I may as well go on and say a pleasant life ——"

"Do not wish so far. Save something for the next time we meet. Adieu," and he bowed.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE RETROSPECT.

THE St. James was more of a private hotel than apartment house. One could be quite as secluded and home-like as one chose. Mrs. Townsend had gathered up some of her choice belongings that had been stored, and the sitting-room looked quite as if some one lived there and was not merely waiting to move on. Miss Maurice thought of young Beaumanoir's word. It was comfortable. What an odd idea for a boyish fellow with very limited experience !

She was going over the pile of letters when the caller was announced. A young woman—three or four years older than herself, who was trying to find a place in the world where she could help along its essential advancement, and reach the front ranks herself. She had given readings, she had lectured a little, but she was eager for higher work. Mrs. Townsend, with all her experience, might see an opening or suggest some course —

Gertrude listened attentively, and made a few notes, took the name and address and explained that Mrs. Townsend had but recently returned to the city, and found so much to do, had to meet so many people, and had very little leisure. She would lay the case before her, but there was not much doing in the summer, and if there was any opening for autumn, Mrs. Townsend would do what she could for her.

Gertrude felt sorry for the tired-looking, unprepossess-

ing girl. To be a success one *did* need attractiveness, or a high order of genius that made itself felt at once. She was really thankful she had no wild ambitions for herself, and was satisfied with the work that had come to her. And what a splendid year it had been—not all rose color or heart's-ease, but she had grown used to the thorny side and the little pricks.

She had adapted herself to her round of duties with no great friction, for she had a good deal of common sense. How the two older Maurice girls had acquired so much, unless some far back ancestor had dowered them with it, was a mystery. There were so many attractive qualities in Mrs. Townsend that Gertrude cheerfully overlooked the occasional fractiousness, for there were various incidents to try one's temper. Gertrude wondered sometimes why a woman of independent means and fine social qualities could not content herself to take the best out of life, and let the old world go its own gait. Clearly Gertrude Maurice was not a philanthropist.

There was the delight of wonderful cities, of charming and cultivated people, of insufferably ill-bred people, who thought money was everything, and were complacently ignorant; lectures, concerts, readings, an occasional theatre, luncheons, suppers, and sometimes an informal dinner. True, a few people snubbed her with a superior air, as if they must make a distinction between the lady and the secretary. But on the whole it had been a grand time, and the woman and the girl had fallen into friendly, as well as excellent business relations.

There had been one trying week, when Mrs. Townsend was absolutely laid aside with influenza, and had to forego several choice pleasures. The nurse was a rather rigid, consequential person, and even Gertrude was glad

to have her go and fill the place herself, through the days of convalescence. She gave the room a different aspect, the chairs no longer looked as if placed for funeral guests. The palm stood on the window-ledge, there were bowls of flowers about, the rugs slipped off in piles on the floor and no one snatched them up. There was a graceful touch of disorder, a little reading, a little talk, a choice friend admitted.

"Gertrude," Mrs. Townsend said one day, "you are a most comfortable person to have about. You are not continually doing useless things and arguing about what is best. I can throw my wrap down and you don't rush across the room to pick it up. I can wrinkle up my pillow and you don't come with a teasing pat that drives me distracted. Yet all the little things get done, one hardly knows how, just at the right time. And when I am cross and flurried you don't get out the thermometer ——"

"But I am not a regular nurse," returned Gertrude, smilingly.

"You are good enough nurse for me, only of course there were other things for you to do, and I could not have taken so much of your time and strength. But you have the art. And you *are* comfortable. That is better than being wise and trained."

"Thank you," Gertrude smiled again.

"I wonder whether you will be married? The bargain was that you were to have no lovers this year. It was rather selfish."

"No; it was just right," returned Gertrude, with a flush. "It was a business bargain, and I wanted the business."

"Fortunately girls do not marry as young as they did. I remember an old great-uncle of mine who had married

three wives, always quoting—"Old age is honorable, but old maids are abominable." Well, as I said, he had saved three women from the direful fate. I think now a girl has generally a very good time from twenty on to half a dozen or so years. She gets some sensible ideas if there is any sense to her. So, my advice is to wait until you have a good opportunity, and I want to say"—Mrs. Townsend gave a rather amused laugh, more at her inward thought than her words,—“that I withdraw my restrictions. A good marriage is the best destiny for a woman, and a home and children are, or ought to be, her safeguards, her hostages to the world, much better than a little fame or a reputation soon forgotten. I should like to have had some of my own. So you see I have no objections to a sensible marriage, if I do sometimes berate silly, sentimental girls and women who sigh for careers, but are all unfitted for them. On the other hand—we have gone along very amicably, and you may consider your position permanent for as long as you like. Next winter I shall have my headquarters in New York. And during the summer you may have a vacation or two, as seems best. Is that satisfactory? I like to have matters settled.”

“I should be unreasonable if it were not,” Gertrude replied, frankly. “And I am—yes, gratified with your good opinion of me,” a warm flush mounting to her brow. “I shall endeavor to keep it.”

Mrs. Townsend nodded, as if to signify that all had been said on both sides. She was not a woman to keep going over the old ground like Mrs. Maurice. And this had been such a rest to the girl. It was the outcome of broad living.

She had a quiet evening before her. She did not care

to read or sew, so she ensconced herself in an easy-chair, and gave way to a peculiar feeling of satisfaction. She was not afraid of the world nor the future, at least for some time to come. The position had many agreeable sides, and when one proved unpleasant she had only to turn the mental kaleidoscope around, and there was a new phase. She had never liked to dwell on irritating or annoying subjects. And this characteristic had led her to put aside the little jar between her and her school friend, Princess Beaumanoir. There was nothing she could explain by letter. If they thought it wiser to drop her, that was all right, too.

Perhaps, with a young girl's romance, she had hoped fate would bring about some reminder from Mr. Murray. It had not. And as she saw more of the world, she learned that a man's interest did not always presage a warmer feeling, and that a sudden touch of sympathy might be as easily forgotten. She knew he was in New York; now and then his name was mentioned in some literary connection. Mrs. Townsend spoke of him just as she did of others who had come under her notice; Gertrude could have forgotten him in the way we set aside our friends when their connection with us is ended.

He had come to call on Mrs. Townsend among her earliest visitors. Whether he was surprised to see her in this capacity she could not quite tell. It was a very enjoyable call, though he had not said much to her. Mrs. Drayton and Mrs. Mallory had followed, and then had come the luncheon, at which she was the guest of honor. O, how she had enjoyed it! And the gay, chatty girls, the agreeable elders, the young men dropping in, the amusing walk with Sherburne Beaumanoir! How odd that he should have become interested in her through

Bertram's letters. How the old summer came back—was it only a year ago?

Perhaps the most gratifying happiness of all was the ready graciousness of Princess that seemed to take back look and word that had rankled at parting and left a little trail. But she was not likely to marry Mr. Murray. Perhaps Princess rested serenely in that assurance. Yes, that was it. What would she think—O, of course Sherburne's sudden fancy had no more foundation than Bertram's boyish preference of last summer. He was so young.

She startled herself by laughing aloud, a soft note of merriment. She was only twenty, he would be twenty-one in the autumn. What made her seem so much older than this group of cousins? Not experience altogether, though poor people did get a great deal more worldly wisdom in their youth, with all the pinches and make-shifts.

She was still sitting there when Mrs. Townsend came in, who inquired if the close of the luncheon had been satisfactory.

"What a pity you had to come home for that poor girl, for whom I can do nothing. How few of them realize that it takes a great deal of training and genius to come up to the front rank—and time as well. A little genius is a very perplexing and dangerous thing. I am glad every day you have not struck that troublesome reef. And yet you *could* fill the rôle as well as dozens of other young women."

"To be with you is a liberal education," quoted Gertrude.

"Thank you; that really is a compliment. And now that you are so near, I suppose you are thinking and

longing for home. I accepted an invitation for a month, to-night, partly travel, partly visiting with some very dear friends. The journey begins next week. So you can have a month at home if you like, and then I think it will be Chautauqua. You will enjoy that, I know, and I shall need you."

"Your plans are always pleasures," responded Gertrude, with brightening eyes.

"Now we must go to bed for our beauty sleep. You must not grow old, and I cannot afford to."

She bethought herself the next morning of the invitation to the young people, and learned that the Beaumanoirs were to start on Saturday. They asked if Gertrude might not join in two or three of their pleasures. Indeed every hour was crowded full, and they could hardly get in all the delights that awaited them.

Professor Kenneth and Mr. Edward Beaumanoir found so many things to talk about that they really talked themselves into friendship, and planned some pursuits for the ensuing winter, when Ned should be in the city. He was very much attracted to Mrs. Kenneth and Ruth, indeed, he declared to Princess he had never known how really delightful girls were.

"I think we have not been very social," he admitted. "You know mother was an invalid for a good many years, and she thought my college vacations ought to be spent with her. Len was always going off with boys. Then there was my year of teaching and last year abroad. I can't tell you how I enjoyed Sherburne. He is such a thorough boy with gleams of manhood shining through. And I think it will be a grand thing for him to study under Doctor Carew's guidance. I feel as if we two boys had missed a good deal in the way of relationship."

"You can have it all now. You can begin over again," said Princess, with interest, her soft eyes shining with earnest friendliness.

The elder Beaumanoir men had drifted apart as the nearest relatives will at times. Mrs. Edward had developed into a fussy, nervous mother, and then into a fussy, nervous invalid. How Mrs. Judge—she always called Mrs. Leonard that after her husband had his appointment, quite proud, if a trifle resentful, of the family dignity,—how she could go away in the summer with a houseful of children, how she could spend weeks in the winter at Washington and leave the children at home, passed Mrs. Edward's comprehension. Her husband confined himself more and more to business, Leonard the younger son found home and his mother's complaints tiresome, and was full of engagements. And so it happened that scholarly Ned, who was gentle and sympathetic, soothed her weary days until she dropped gently out of life.

Her husband was really shocked. When his brothers and sisters came to the funeral it awoke memories of the old times at Beaumanoir and Sherburne House. Really, the portly judge looked almost as young as he. And there was his father still hale and hearty; the girls with all their children. He seemed to have been shut out of the vital family interest. A narrow woman had narrowed his life and he had not possessed the force of character to make a stand against it.

He plunged anew into business. The house was dreary. One son always at his books, the other full of boyish engagements, and nothing to draw them together in sympathetic bonds. Then he had married again with but little notice, a rather pretty, affectionate, middle-

aged woman, who after a hard struggle with life had been left alone, and was really grateful for the rest and the home she could make attractive and enjoy.

Ned had taken it rather painfully at first, and held aloof in his diffident fashion. Leonard dropped into an easy-going familiarity. They found the house bright and cheerful, their father thawing out of his unsocial ways, their own pleasure consulted, and they paid her a respectful regard.

Edward had been really fascinated with the social life everywhere, the strength, dignity and intelligence of the heads of the families. Mrs. Carew was the "Cousin Dell" of Sherburne House, the admirable mother who found time and interest for much outside of her own life. Doctor Carew stood high in his profession and was the author of several notable works, with a broader scope than mere technical knowledge. Even in midsummer when people were thronging seashores and mountains, there were well attended evenings at the Draytons, it seemed, and Aunt Millicent was charming. The Mallorys welcomed the cousins warmly. And they could hardly accept the fact that Mrs. Kenneth was an invalid, she was so vivacious and entertaining.

"And what relation is Miss Ensign?" Cousin Ned asked. "Every time I think of you girls I get confused and tangled up. I shall have to draw a family tree."

The "girls" laughed as they suddenly stared at each other.

"A relation by grace," replied Ruth, with a most attractive smile. "At school the girls used to envy the Sherburne cousins, they had such good times among themselves, and they were not exclusive either. They opened the gates to the charmed pastures and invited us in ——"

"That was Princess," interposed Violet.

Princess flushed rosy red.

"And I have half adopted Miss Ensign to console me for my daughter who married and deserved a good long holiday," said Mrs. Kenneth.

"And I think Mrs. Townsend has about half adopted Gertie Maurice. Now you have all the moving history," laughed Pearl.

Princess was attracted by the quick, pleasurable lights that came and went in Ruth's face as the professor made a little aside in the talk to her. She would not need to go away, even when love came.

Aunt Lyndell waived her right to the young people since Mrs. Townsend had selected the last evening of their stay for her entertainment. There were several others invited, and Gertrude being in part hostess, dispensed her attentions so impartially that Sherburne Beaumanoir felt a little vexed at not being able to monopolize her. But there would be all next winter, so he consoled himself. He inherited some of his father's easy philosophy.

It was really lonesome when the bright young company had gone. Ned had been strongly inclined to remain and have a quiet fortnight with the professor and learn something about his new duties. But he really did owe that respect to his father who had been generous with both boys while they were abroad.

"I never supposed there was the making of such a fine man in Ned Beaumanoir," said Doctor Carew to his wife. "I wish he were going to be my student, only I can't imagine a fellow with such delicate nerves and tastes practicing medicine."

"O, you must not like any of the boys better than

Sherburne," exclaimed Lyndell, flushing in her excitement. "Think of the old times and that long ago wedding."

"And the gift of Sherburne House, and the baby's birth, and our own wedding. All those times are crowded with tenderest remembrances. And Sherburne expressed one hope, or half prediction that when he was elderly and had made fame and money and Sherburne House came to him, he should go there and live, and be a sort of country benefactor, take up the work Doctor Underwood would lay down."

"That is a delightful plan," exclaimed Dell, her eyes alight with emotion and interest.

"He won't achieve it, I am afraid. I am really troubled about this new plan. He went wild you know over languages and literature and would go abroad. Whatever gave him this fancy—he entertained it before he came home and has been studying up a little. I do not want his father to think I persuaded him. Leonard's heart was set upon his studying law."

"I think medicine grander, higher."

"For some men—yes. Yet I think a lawyer oftener comes up to the fine places in public life. And I am sorry to have Len disappointed. Then too, there would be such an excellent connection for a young fellow to step into. However, Sherburne may change his mind."

"But I do like his ideal."

"I wonder—" Bertram Carew studied his wife's face with a half nervous scrutiny.

"O, you needn't tell me," she responded, laughingly. "When you say 'wonder' in that tone, I know it means 'will you never be sorry that one of our boys is not going back to the old home to be Sherburne of Sher-

burne House?' Would you take it back on the possibility?"

"A thousand times no. I aided and abetted you. I think I asked it of you as a preliminary to marriage." There was a gleam of amusement in his eyes. "My dear Lyndell, Leonard's love for the place and care of it is enough to reward us both. Who could have made Aunt Aurelia so happy, and given Cousin Carrick just that kind of home for her declining years! Our destiny lay in a different direction. Our boys will have a wide range to choose from. And Sherburne's dream is like the happy ending of a delightful romance. But it is a long way from twenty to fifty, and ideals change."

"But you will do your best for him?" anxiously.

"As if he was my own son,—if he comes back in the autumn of the same mind."

"You do not quite trust him."

"His temperament is a little volatile. What seems like strength may be an eager desire to please one's self. He is a handsome, attractive fellow, and doesn't appear to have acquired any vices, one of the young men who will be a general favorite with society and that the world will judge leniently. Do you want me to express any more admiration for the heir of Sherburne?"

"You have been very generous," returned Lyndell, smilingly. "O, how strange it seems with all these little children growing up to men and women! When the first person gave birth to the aphorism that 'Childhood was the happiest time of life,' he should have added 'to the parents.' You do not have to think what you shall do with them, nor feel afraid of some unreasonable love affair. O, I am glad that I have a few more years of grace."

Doctor Carew bent over and kissed his wife.

“It is quite ridiculous to think of sons-in-law, and daughters-in-law. I am afraid I shall not be able to select as wisely as dear father did. ‘His little girl.’ I think that is in some old letters.”

The soft tears flooded Lyndell’s eyes. Yes, that had been a happy time in spite of its sorrows and her first dreadful summer at Sherburne House. She had been the child of the father’s love before she had been the son’s wife.

There began preparations for the home-going. Edward Beaumanoir would spend another week in the city, and he had half a mind to go to Labrador with Professor Kenneth, but Sherburne persuaded him to come to them for a visit, and he did owe his father some respect. Mrs. Osborne begged the Carew twins, as they were all eagerness to see the younger Beaumanoir cousins.

It was quite lonely when they had gone. But there were to be summer plans for the others.

“I think we shall have to own an island or a hotel,” declared Mr. Drayton, humorously. “There are so many of us, and we agree so well together that we might start a regular colony.”

CHAPTER V.

IN THE BOSOM OF THE FAMILY.

GERTRUDE MAURICE started homeward with a variety of emotions. She longed to see the household, yet she shrank from the first meeting. She had changed greatly she knew. The littleness of everything would stifle her.

Yet why should her broader, truer outlook lead to any diminution of affection? Had they truly loved each other? She had cared most for Agnes and her father, but her father was so different from these other fathers, who took such exquisite interest in their children. It made her heart ache. It also made her frightened and ashamed.

Agnes had married Mr. Rowdon early in the winter. Gertrude would have liked her to be more frank and more enthusiastic about her own feelings. Her thoughts seemed to be of the good home and the kindly husband. It would relieve papa of some care, for they were to take Virginia, who was a delicate child. Old Nancy who did their washing and chores, and was a tolerable cook, would come for low wages, "and you know mamma dotes on a servant," wrote Agnes. "Mr. Rowdon has grown very fond of me in certain ways and we shall get along very well together. If you can spare Lu and Elsie a little now and then for clothes, we shall all be content. Only send the money to me to spend, for you know mamma has no great judgment in such matters,

and I shall expect to look after some things just as if I were still at home."

There had been a family dinner at the Rowdons. The parlor had been newly furnished to some extent. Agnes seemed thoroughly satisfied with her pleasant home and her elderly husband. Luella wrote complaining letters occasionally, and begged for money, or to have some suitable garment sent her. She thought it very hard that Agnes should receive the money when she had enough of her own.

Mrs. Maurice never wrote any letters. She, too, sent her complaints through Agnes. Her father sent love and good wishes and hoped she was enjoying herself. So all the family affairs came through the commonplace but rather philosophical pen, and Gertrude's past experience enabled her to understand that the present was much like the past.

O why should people be so different? There was a long line of ancestry on her mother's side, who always bewailed the fact that she had put a slight upon it by marrying Mr. Maurice. It would have been bad enough if he had proved Aunt Sampson's heir. And Gertrude had brought fresh misfortune on the family by not being a boy. None of the others were ever blamed as severely as she, though she could not understand why. So she kept thinking on her homeward journey of the green and sunny pastures she had left behind. She did not so much mind now that Mr. Murray's greeting had been gay and friendly. She had told herself the whole year that the odd little episode had really meant nothing. She understood how many flattering speeches men could make to women, that were the outcome of momentary pleasure. And she had learned too, that without beauty she had a

certain attractiveness. Now that she knew her position was assured, she should be in no haste to marry. She would like to be loved fondly, warmly, she confessed secretly to herself. Perhaps such husbands as Mr. Amory and Mr. Drayton and Doctor Carew were above the average. Would she have fulfilled her own purposes of life better if she had not had that lovely summer? And yet if God sent all things,—and she had not outgrown her childhood's faith in a supreme ruler,—had He not sent that delightful experience to her?

The town was unchanged. It looked less business-like, or was it the contrast with busier places? Down yonder she could see the piles of lumber grown grey and weather-beaten. A man pulled his faded felt hat to her and said—

“Hillo! Back agen, Mis' Maurice? Heerd you were out in Californy! Great country that! Why—'pears to me you've grown taller!”

She nodded and passed on. There were other half-asleep towns in the world. There were other places of small interest, bounded by the semi-annual house cleaning, the church affairs, the summer picnic and the winter “supper,” the Christmas doings, and the gossip on Sundays about “Who was sick, who had made a new rug, or a new gown, or a new comfortable, or occasionally who had a new baby, or who was engaged.” Most of the girls married young if not well, the others at a little past twenty accepted the fate of spinsterhood, to the mortification of the mothers. The simplicity of country life that people sometimes raved over meant stagnation. A woman's club would be horrifying to these people, a woman doctor and a woman lecturer was quite outside the pale of respectability.

It almost seemed as if her mother could not have moved since last summer. She sat on the porch in the low rocker; she glanced up and received the kiss of the tall girl bending over her, with no especial show of emotion, and no word of welcome.

"Are you well? Where are the others?" in a rapid tone to keep down the great lump in her throat.

"I am never well"—pointedly. "But I get along. O, they are all over to the Rowdon house. It has been very pleasant to have the interest, and Agnes has proved herself a thoughtful daughter. In a place like this girls cannot have much choice, and I said to Agnes—'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.' Mr. Rowdon had his home and his money. I married your father not supposing his adopted mother, for she was that, was going to cut him off with a paltry five hundred dollars. If you had been a boy—and Gertrude, *you* should have married Mr. Rowdon. Not but what Agnes makes him a better wife, only you were older, and it is a bad sign for the oldest not to go first."

"Yes, Agnes suits him a great deal better," said Gertrude, in the pause.

"I'm sure I don't see where you got your ideas from, Gertrude. I have tried to bring my girls up in a womanly fashion. In Bible times they were meant for wives and mothers, and to be the centre of a home. It stands to reason that an old maid can't be the centre of anything, and never can have a home."

"O yes, there are single women who have lovely homes," interposed Gertrude.

"That is a matter of opinion. I believe all your rich friends of last summer were married, and I suppose they expect their daughters to marry. At all events I expect

my girls to marry, and Agnes has set them a good example if you don't interfere and spoil their lives as Aunt Sampson did yours."

"I am not likely to interfere," returned Gertrude, with a touch of bitterness. "I may keep my position for some years to come."

That answered a question her mother meant to get around to presently. She fancied herself quite adroit in some things. But that a girl could go out to California and back again and see a great deal of society and not find a lover, passed her narrow comprehension. The girl must be very unattractive. She glanced sidewise at Gertrude. The soft blue and white fine checked silk was stylish, her gloves were an exquisite fit—Gertrude had a small hand like her own. Her dark blue straw hat was becoming, turned up at one side with a bunch of field flowers. She had a black wrap and a dark-blue parasol. She *did* look very ladylike. Then why did she not have a lover? Was there such a thing as being born for an old maid." The mother sighed.

A wagon and a big bony horse came rattling up the street with her trunk. Mrs. Maurice rang a little bell on the table beside her.

"Nancy," when the rather untidy woman answered tardily, "will you show Miss Maurice up to her room. And let the man take her trunk."

"Land, Miss Gertie, how tall you be! Why you must have growed!"

"Nancy," with a certain sharpness, "will you remember that she is Miss Maurice, the oldest girl in the family, older than her married sister."

"Land now!" and Nancy stared. Farther south she would have been classed among the poor whites. Mrs.

Maurice would much rather have had a black serving woman, but they came higher.

Gertrude had risen. "Mamma, perhaps I had as well run over and see the girls ——"

"I should imagine when you had been away almost a year, Gertrude, that your mother would be your first thought. But I suppose business women pay little attention to such things."

"Of course I will stay." Gertrude put some cheerfulness in her voice. She had learned many lessons the last year, and one was that the world had not been made solely for her.

She followed Nancy and the trunk upstairs. How nice and homey it looked—just as it had in the reign of Agnes. She could not have guessed that the young wife had been over in the morning and "straightened up" everything. She hung up her sacque and hat in the small closet, unlocked her trunk and shook out some gowns. Her best silk and her evening gown had been consigned to Mrs. Kenneth's care. True, her evening gown had been a gift from Mrs. Townsend, but she did not want to arouse a suspicion of extravagance. A few other articles went into the empty bureau drawer. She bathed her face and hands, laid aside her waist for a fresh cambric, and went down again.

"It's very poor and plain after hotel life," began Mrs. Maurice, complainingly. "But with five girls your father has had a hard pull, Gertrude."

"And now there are only three for him to think about, since I can care for myself," was the cheerful comment.

"And Agnes is *well* married," with dignified emphasis. "I could wish Mr. Rowdon had been younger, but in a town like this, and no advantages for travel, you

must do the best you can. Your school and travel has not done much for you, it would seem."

"Yes, it has given me a good friend and pleasant employment, and an opportunity to do a little for the girls."

She would not be quite put down.

Her mother sniffed in disapprobation.

They would never agree about themselves. Gertrude began to ask after the neighbors. One or two had died, several of the girls had married. "And the Conover boys had both gone to Philadelphia to business. Joe is engaged to a girl there. That makes it so hard for the girls here. And Rachel Blake is teaching in the high school, which I think would have been much better for you."

"But there was no vacancy last summer. And Rachel had some experience in the public school."

There was a silence of some moments.

"Gertrude, I must express one wish, though I dare say it won't have much weight with you, yet it seems as if you ought to obey me in my own home. I don't want you to infect Lu with your wild ideas. She has some unwomanly notions in her head now."

Gertrude could think of no reply to make.

"A young man has begun to wait on her. Every mother wishes to see her daughters in homes of their own. She is in the high school, but she isn't—Agnes thinks she has no gift for teaching, and it is a dog's life. I have never wanted my girls to lower themselves by any employment. There should be something delicate and high-bred about a young girl, a sort of cloistered sweetness, a—I think the French bring up their daughters with a fine sense of propriety."

Gertrude thought of Agnes drudging in the kitchen,

with a woman only now and then of a day. Why was her mother always looking at far-off ideals!

"Who is waiting on Luella?" she asked, briefly.

"Perhaps it isn't *quite* keeping company," the mother admitted. "It is Ross Adams. He drops in now and then and walks home from church with her."

"But he is so young!" exclaimed Gertrude, in amaze.

"They are both young. Your father and I were young. There is a beginning to everything."

Gertrude did not controvert this.

"So I do not want you to encourage her in any wild ideas about going away from home. There is no better place than home for a young girl. And I don't see that you have done so very much by your independence," harping on the grievance.

There was a whirl up the path and Luella's boisterous greeting, Elsie's delighted hug and kiss.

"We weren't sure you would come to-day, and if you did, Agnes said we were all to come back after supper. She's making some delicious corn fritters—I do wonder what we are going to have!" and the whirlwind sped out to the kitchen.

"O Gertie, how beautiful you have grown," whispered Elsie, nestling against her shoulder. "I want to be very handsome, like the girls in pictures, and I want pink cheeks, not staring red ones."

She patted her silk skirt with a delicate touch. And then Mr. Maurice came up the path and shook both of Gertrude's hands, and kissed her warmly.

"We didn't know as we should ever get you back again," he began. "I wonder some of the fellows over there," nodding his head westward, "didn't snap you up."

Gertrude colored. She remembered that in this small town much was made of marriage, there was indeed no other career open to women except a little teaching, a little "sewing round," still lower in the social scale, a paperbox factory, lower still, and a canning factory with its work part of the year.

Mrs. Maurice sniffed with an air that suggested no one was likely to want Gertrude.

Still her father was more interested in her doings and what she had seen, and the fact that she was quite able to take care of herself. For years he had heard the groaning over five girls, as if it had been a conspiracy between him and them. And he was proud of her traveling about. People with wider outlooks called her a lucky girl.

Gertrude was really impatient to see Agnes in her own home. She and Lu started presently. It was a pleasant walk through the quiet streets, with the stars shining through spaces in the tree branches that met overhead. She hardly noted Lu's chatter.

Agnes and Mr. Rowdon were sitting on the new porch, that was already vine-wreathed. She uttered an exclamation of delight as she sprang up and greeted Gertrude warmly. Mr. Rowdon was very cordial, but as he looked her over and in a vague fashion that he did not understand himself, noted the dignity and the air of self-knowledge that pervaded her, indications of a certain strength and force, he wondered how he had ever thought of marrying her.

"We were not going to look for you until to-morrow," Agnes began. "And it will be such a pleasure to have you a whole month! To think of the wonderful things you have seen! And your letters were next best to see-

ing it one's self, only I think I should feel frightened to go roaming round the world."

"But when you are not alone, and everything goes so smoothly ——"

"But it must cost a mint of money," said Mr. Rowdon, filling the little pause she made, and her thought had been the money also. "There's no knowing what you may want for old age."

Old age looked far off to the youthful side of twenty.

She pressed the hand of Agnes that she was still holding in her own. Her sister's welcome had gone to her heart.

Mr. Rowdon took up his pipe again. Lu asked where Virgie was.

"Her head ached and she went to bed. Your walk was too long, Lu. Virgie cannot stand so much. Don't you want to see the house, Gertie?" Agnes asked, with some pride.

"O yes," was the interested reply.

"The porch is so nice, isn't it? I sit out there half the time. And you never would know this room. It used to be the kitchen."

It was kitchen and parlor and everything but sleeping-room in Miss Maria's time. Now the wall had been painted a light pinkish grey, the old sofa freshly covered, the rush bottomed chairs had a new coat of greenish yellow, the big fireplace was full of feathery asparagus and looked like a fairy bower. There were two small tables with bowls of flowers on them, some hanging shelves with books, a wall pocket with papers and a dining-table with a red and white cloth.

"But the kitchen is my pride," exclaimed housewifely Agnes. "It is so new and nice, and closets

everywhere, and only four steps down to the spring-house, the milk-room, where everything is so beautifully cool. And a shed for wood—look here!” opening a door. “We use it nearly always, for I can keep it so tidy. O Gertie, it is such a delight to have a house of one’s own; and some one who is thinking about your comfort all the time.”

Lu had not followed them hither. Gertrude turned quickly and gave her sister a deep questioning glance.

“You *are* happy?” she asked, with a curious huskiness of tone.

Agnes flushed, laughed and looked oddly pretty.

“Why—yes,” she replied. “Gertrude, you don’t mind that he—that ——”

“That he gave me up? O, no.”

“But you gave him up, he said. Though he thought he had made a mistake. You see he came a good deal the summer you were in Maine, but we used to talk about you. I was afraid you did not appreciate him. I can see now it never would have done. And I think he had a hard time with Miss Maria, which made him queerer. He is old fashioned to be sure ——”

“I am sorry he is so much older than you.”

“Well—he grows younger, he really does,” and there was a pleasant ring in the wife’s voice. “Then you know I had grown so used to papa.”

They turned about.

“I keep Miss Maria’s room for the guest chamber. He had some cousins come from Farmington and they had such a nice visit. They had quarreled with Miss Maria, though they attended the funeral. I liked them ever so much. And we haven’t changed any of the parlor furniture, only to put up curtains and a few pictures,

and here is a beautiful lamp husband gave me for my birthday, and father gave me this chair when I was married. Gertie, your gift was lovely. And you have been so generous. You must not pinch yourself."

She *had* pinched herself more than once.

Agnes had a hand-lamp in her hand. The parlor would have looked gloomy but for the drapery at the window. And it had the chill of unused rooms, even in the summer.

"You had better save up a little I think if you can spare any," said the thoughtful younger sister. "You see you have been away from home so much, and you don't quite understand. Mamma has not the first idea of the value of money. And papa was behindhand. Mamma wanted a grand wedding, but I said it really wasn't suitable for Mr. Rowdon. We just had a little party, and quite an elaborate supper when we came home here. And now papa is pretty well out of debt. I made some of your gowns and your coat over for Lu, and they did real well all winter. I gave papa twenty-five dollars of your money and he was so delighted. Poor papa," and she sighed.

"Why I would have sent it to him ——"

"I know, dear, I asked you to send it to me. You see mamma or Lu would have spent it injudiciously. And now papa's expenses *are* smaller, with only three of them, and I want Lu to keep at school and graduate. Then she could teach."

"Or marry," said Gertrude, with a laugh.

"I hope she will be sensible about that. She ought to steady down. But we will have some good long talks. You must come over here and stay. You can't think how papa enjoys coming to Sunday night supper."

"My room upstairs is all refurnished," Agnes added, "but I will save that to show you next time. O, there are so many things to say."

Mr. Rowdon was actually teasing his young sister-in-law, who was sitting on the porch step.

"And you fell in with all those Maine people again," began Agnes. Gertrude was glad to talk about them. But Lu bounced up presently and declared they must go home.

It was like being in a different world, Gertrude found in a few days. Sometimes she smiled to herself over the complacent narrowness. And yet most of these people were happy comparing notes about everything in their small round, exchanging recipes and sleeve and skirt patterns, and having their hats and bonnets trimmed with "just such a bow as Mrs. Golden had on hers." Miss Frear, the milliner, did not have to rack her brains for original ideas. The style was what every one adopted, and even last year's gown was not so utterly out of place.

She settled to the assurance that Agnes was truly happy. And she learned one fact to which she had given little thought before, that Agnes took a very fervent delight in making others happy. She put Mr. Rowdon at his best, and really there were some good points that Miss Maria had nipped off in her arbitrary fashion, because they neither saved nor made money. Hoarding up had been the poor woman's religion.

The years between them were not so dreadfully in evidence. Agnes looked well, she had taken up the cares of life too soon to have any real girlhood. She had been her father's adviser the last three years, and she soon slipped into the same place with Mr. Rowdon. The alterations in the house, the garden with its thrifty

vegetables, its clean paths, the pretty flower-beds, where she often weeded or transplanted with him, the neat table with its pretty porcelain and snowy cloth instead of the checked and chipped dishes soon became his pride.

Was it not beauty and orderliness in the common ways of life? Was it not really the finer endeavor to make those around one happy? Agnes had no ambition for the high places. There was no restless yearning, no thought of being wasted in the small round. She read the newspaper to her husband, and Gertrude found she had some very correct and sensible opinions. They went out driving, they called upon the neighbors, though this was rather a trial to him; he enjoyed their coming in much more. And Agnes dressed better. She discarded the depressing greys for pretty gingham, because Mr. Rowdon liked them. And little Virginia was a source of interest to them both.

Every day she went over home and gave Nancy some suggestions and listened to her mother's complainings with a tender patience, as if she recognized that any attempt to alter the current of the weak, opinionated mind would be futile. Yet Mrs. Maurice had come to have a great respect for her married daughter, and treated her with a deference that astonished Gertrude.

Luella's restlessness was a source of some disquiet. Agnes said much the same thing about her to Gertrude as Mrs. Maurice had, only in a different manner. But Lu seized the first opportunity to express her desires quite vigorously.

"I'm just as tired of this place as you ever were, Gertrude," she said, decisively. "And I wish you'd find me something to do in the city."

"At what?" in rather amused inquiry.

"O, I don't care. I could tend in a store. I suppose I couldn't find a Mrs. Townsend to take me up. Gert, you are lucky!"

"You couldn't fill the place; you could not at present take any position where responsibility and experience were demanded. You need training——"

"You get the experience by doing things," interrupted the younger. "And I just hate the little things over and over. I want something wider and different, where you can have some pleasure."

"If you begin with the pleasures, you will be sadly disappointed."

"I am sure you have had lots of them."

"I have been fortunate, I think. But I was older than you, and had my school training. You couldn't do anything in such a place, Lu. And you would get tired of writing letters and seeing people who did not interest you, who were unreasonable and full of vanity and conceit, and who thought they could be put in the front ranks and make a future at once."

"I'd send them flying——"

"But you couldn't. You must be polite, and as gracious as possible. You cannot understand, Luella. You have been so used to doing just what you like, or grumbling about the things you don't like. And girls in stores and offices make long days and earn a poor living, many of them. They have a small room in a poor boarding-house, and no society to speak of. Everything costs so much in a city. Then if you are teaching, it is some years before you come up to a good salary."

"But girls *do* have a good time somewhere. There are places to go, and—and theatres and parties——"

"When you are through school and have graduated,

and have toned down a little, if I am in the city, I will promise you an outing, so you will see what the city is like, and whether a life of work looks so inviting. But you must try and be more ladylike and gentle in your ways, and refined."

"You are a fussy old thing!" flung out Luella. "You'll just be an old maid, as manima says."

"There are plenty of them in the great cities. There are not so many chances to marry."

"I should think there would be more. And I mean to marry," with emphasis.

"Then you ought to fit yourself for home-making. You couldn't have a better pattern than Agnes."

"Well, I'm not going to marry an old fellow like that, and never go to parties or dances, and just putter around about housework! You'll see!" and Luella tossed her head airily. "But it does seem as if you might do something for me."

Gertrude studied the unreasonable, ignorant child, and then she laughed at the foolishness of trying to argue with her.

"You needn't laugh, either." Lu turned very red and her eyes sparkled.

"I will do something, if you will fit yourself for it. This is a promise, Luella. If you will graduate fairly well, I will be on the watch for an opportunity. At least, you may come and try—if I keep my position."

"Well—I can't graduate next year. I didn't get in the class," she said, disconsolately.

"Two years. You will be young then."

"I wish you'd send *me* some money," she began, presently. "Why should Agnes have it all? And I do want a silk gown so."

"I'll give you a silk gown, if that will make you happy."

"O, that will be great! Two of the girls are going to have birthday parties in the fall. And Gertrude, if I could have a real party—would it cost very much?"

"We might all join and help you out," and Gertrude smiled. Had she ever been as silly as this? She had recognized the limitations of a small income, and Agnes had been sensible all her life. What could she do to improve this inconsequent, thoughtless girl, who seemed to have no idea but personal enjoyment of the flightiest kind, and not as sensible as little Virginia. And of all things in this world common sense was needed most.

"Luella," she began again, gravely, "if you mean to be or do anything worth while, you will find education is a necessity. And pretty, refined manners——"

"O gracious! don't lecture any more!" exclaimed the younger.

For Lu was still a hoyden, and ran races and climbed trees and could take a fence equal to a boy. What a pity she had not been a boy!

"Events do go contrariwise in this world," she said to Agnes, with a sigh, after she had repeated the gist of this conversation.

"And some go smoothly enough, or would, if we did not interfere," said the younger, with a smile. "I'm not sure but a boy like Lu would be the finish of us all. I sometimes wonder why all these children were given to mamma, who doesn't understand a thing about managing children, when there are so many people in the world longing for one or two. We can only hope Lu will tame down in a year or two."

CHAPTER VI.

IN A STRAIT BETWIXT TWO.

THE greatest surprise of Gertrude's month at home was a note from Sherburne Beaumanoir, a pleasant, chatty, off-hand epistle, detailing some of their summer pleasures, and wishing she could be there to share them, and announcing that he should run up from Baltimore and make a call upon her.

Gertrude was simply amazed. There was nothing to take exception at; it was gentlemanly, friendly, as if they had been acquainted all their lives, and such a call was the most natural thing in the world. In a certain way it was gratifying, but quite impossible. It would fill her mother's head with foolish plans and hopes that would make no end of gossip in the town. Friendliness between young people Mrs. Maurice could not understand. With her, every attention pointed the way to matrimony.

There was another vague aspect to Gertrude. She was beginning to realize the susceptible side to young men. And though this spurt of admiration might mean only a temporary interest, it was not wisdom to encourage it. Still with the other side of her nature she could see the half amusement, half vexation such a fancy would cause, even if it was evanescent. And now that they had taken her up so cordially, she would do nothing to annoy them.

She had numerous engagements. The neighbors about made old-fashioned tea-parties for her. To have been in

California, to say nothing of the nearer-by cities, was quite equal to going to Europe in their estimation. Mrs. Maurice was somewhat mollified with these attentions, though she took pains to explain for the hundredth time that Gertrude's going away was against her will, and that she never did or could approve of business women; that home must always be the true centre of a woman's life.

She wrote a dainty little note, pleading engagements and short absences from home, and the general dull aspect the town would have for a stranger who had seen so much, with a suggestion of inconvenience she knew his good breeding would lead him to respect. And yet she smiled a little to herself, in the thought that she might attract the nephew as well as the uncle. Mr. Murray's fancy had not been of the durable kind, evidently.

When she fell into a fit of wonderment as to how Agnes could be happy with a man so much older than himself, she thought of Mr. Murray. In a certain fashion he seemed to have shaped her judgment of young men. They appeared so very youthful to her. And there had been Ward Garrison, who had recently married the girl selected for him and was very happy it seemed. Perhaps if she had met him quite alone with no stronger influence at hand, she might have drifted into the regard many girls think strong enough to marry upon, and are reasonably satisfied. She knew Mr. Murray had made such a step impossible to her, and that during the past year other men had suffered by comparison with him. Why should she make him the arbiter of her destiny? This mysterious influence that she could not shake off, fretted her. And much as she really loved Princess Beaumanoir and admired her mother, it was Mr. Murray's disap-

proval that stood out the most strongly against any expressed admiration on the young man's part.

She spent days with Agnes, helping with the family sewing, the burthen the young wife had taken cheerfully to her new home.

"I sometimes wonder if time ever hangs heavy on mamma's hands," she said one day to Agnes. "There is a great deal said about the folly and frivolity of society women, and yet they keep very busy, if it is only pleasure. Some of them, many of them are in charitable or philanthropic work, and even society visiting makes demands on one. You are expected to add your mite to the general entertainment. Think of the time mamma spends just sitting on the porch looking at the same things she has looked at for thirty or forty years. She can darn lace exquisitely, and tablecloths and stockings. But it would be an excellent idea to now and then have the breath of strong new things. And those fifty or hundred-year-old novels she reads, with their exaggerated ideas and formal manners—yet one finds a great deal of roughness and coarseness in them as well. O, I *do* like the modern world. There must be a good many changes."

"I suppose there have been since mamma's time. Yet she is not so very old either. But I think she must have been brought up on still farther back lines, when delicacy was considered one of the greatest virtues. And she was an only child."

"And had a little money and didn't have to scramble as we always have," laughed Gertrude. "It is partly in the place, too. Cities adapt new ideas sooner than inland towns. The world goes on with a rush. It is such a great, splendid world, Agnes."

"But you see every one doesn't like the rush. So it is good that there are ways of satisfying different people."

"And you are satisfied?"

Gertrude's tone was as much wonder as assertion.

Agnes flushed and gave an irresolute little laugh.

"Not satisfied to stop," she replied. "I want ever so many more things to happen, things I can help along."

"As what?"

"I want Virgie to get well and strong. I think she has some rather curious traits, and she is fond of learning about people and what they have done. Perhaps by and by you can help her, Gertrude. And Elsie is a good deal like me; she will make a housekeeper if she gets the right kind of training."

"Who trained you?" There was a spice of mischief in Gertrude's tone.

"I suppose I had the aptitude for it that you had for learning. I should have been miserable at school, and I couldn't go about as you have done. Yet I enjoy your letters better than any book I have ever read. They are so vivid, you can see the places and the people. I read them to Mr. Rowdon, and he used to look so for their coming."

"Then if they do you so much good, I shall write oftener."

"O, please do. Virgie was so delighted when you described people."

And sometimes Gertrude had wondered what she should write about! The effort had been irksome. She hardly thought her gossip, often put in to fill up, would prove so entertaining. Agnes had gone far beyond her in thoughtfulness for others.

"We have settled everybody's fate but Luella's," she

remarked, presently. "Agnes, tell me what I had better do. I have promised her a silk frock, and I shall not give her one of my old ones," laughingly.

"So long as you don't encourage any of her wild vagaries and leave her just where she is, I think she will come to some common sense. There are not many chances in life like yours, but she has an idea that one has only to go and ask for a thing. I am sure you tried quite a long while."

"And had a great many hours of discouragement. There are so many people for each place. But—you do not think—she may marry?"

"O, that is mamma's nonsense. She sees with the eye of faith a possible lover in every young man. Lu isn't sentimental. None of us are."

There was a great deal of nonsense masquerading under the name of sentiment, Gertrude knew. There were foolish girls who thought they could not live without the regard of some especial man. But still, there was a very sacred love. Was everybody capable of it? Agnes deserved it for her unselfishness, her care for every one's welfare.

"At least," thought Gertrude, "I can give her a truer appreciation than ever before." She was touched by a new humility, a tenderness she had not known in the past.

Yet she was not sorry when the summons came for her to join Mrs. Townsend. Not that the days had been absolutely tiresome, and she had found many things to do for them all. But the round was small, the life narrow.

"I shall miss you so much," Agnes said. "But the letters will begin again. Yes," with a sudden brightness, "I think it is a good thing that you should be out in the

world, gathering up treasures for us. You know now they are not wasted."

She would never feel so again. She began to see that there were duties beside sending money home now and then and thinking all the rest of life belonged to herself.

There had been a curious little fear lest she should hear again from Sherburne Beaumanoir. He was impulsive and considered his own pleasures, and was quite used to taking the enjoyment even if he went a little out of his way to do it, and trenched on that of another.

There had been a very joyous time at Sherburne over him, a kind of feast with the families gathered in as far as they could. But ah, how they had strayed off. Beaumanoir was a rather lonely place now with no young life gladdening, making merry, and sometimes bringing sorrow. Even the sorrows and anxieties were sweet remembrances to the two old people who had a great deal of time to gather up the olden threads and weave anew the various patterns of life.

Yet they felt they had been very happy in their children. Judge Beaumanoir coming to a ripe busy middle life, much more ambitious for honors than in early manhood. Was it not true that children spurred one on? Millicent and Violet in lovely homes of their own, Fanny and Doctor Underwood near by and a continual source of interest, Edward really renewing his youth in the ease and content of his second marriage, Cecil in Russia. And there was Lyndell Carew, as dear as any of them, and Doctor Carew like another son.

After a brief glimpse at home and a warm welcome from their father, the Baltimore cousins had come to Sherburne. Princess was the envy of the girls about, she had so many cavaliers, but she was very generous

with them. Sherburne was her choicest possession just now; they had the arrears of two years to make up. But Bertram was shooting up into a tall boy and would go to college next year.

Professor Kenneth had promised them a week.

"Maybe you won't like him just at first," explained Bertram, "but he knows so much and is so interested in everything. We did have such a delightful time with him on the island."

"Isn't he rather sweet on that Miss Ensign, Princess? And how charming Mrs. Kenneth is. Of course she would be very likely to chose her brother's wife ——"

"He doesn't want any wife," interposed Bertram, eagerly. "He is just splendid as he is. There ought to be some men left for the boys. Ruth Ensign is well enough, but I liked Gertie Maurice ever so much better. She was lots of fun! Did you like her just as well, Princess, or has traveling about the world spoiled her?"

"No, she isn't spoiled. And she keeps a warm remembrance of last summer. I think she has grown prettier."

"Some girls really need to grow prettier," declared astute seventeen, "but she is so bright you never think whether she is pretty or not."

"She has grown more dignified."

"I wish you had asked her down here. I think she would have thrown dignity to the winds. She was always so ready to do anything."

"Is it too late now?" asked Sherburne.

"It is too early," said Princess, with a little unwillingness she did not understand herself. "She is to go home as soon as Mrs. Townsend can spare her. And

when she has not been home for almost a year she must be anxious to see her people. I suppose her vacation depends on Mrs. Townsend's need of her."

"Anyhow, we want the professor first."

Princess had found it delightful to be welcomed home by a wide circle. Grandmamma and everybody took it for granted that her school days were over. And she had resolved to go to college. There was so much she still wanted to learn.

Ray had come with her. Violet Osborne had gone with the Amorys to their cottage at Atlantic City, where they hoped to gather most of the cousins in August.

"I do not see any need of a college course for you," the judge had said, kindly, to his sweet, youthful daughter. "You will not teach—there are enough women in the world who must do something, and those who are not compelled to enter the ranks ought to give the opportunity to their less favored sisters. Your mother and I want you at home—a few years at least," smiling rather mysteriously.

Could she give up her dream and be happy?

"There are the two boys to look after, and then—three more. It will quite shake my purse," he said, humorously.

The first three children had trodden closely upon each other, but the others at wider intervals. There were two girls and then Lawrence, much younger. There were times when Tessy Beaumanoir felt lonely without a baby in the house, and was almost sorry to think of coming manhood and womanhood.

Yes, Princess understood, and she was one to accept without much friction. She was needed at home. She had duties as a daughter. And when she thought it over

seriously it was not so much from a desire to make a place for herself, as a hunger for knowledge.

Her mother was so glad to get her at home once more, and did need her in the entertainment of guests, for Sherburne House was hospitable to the last degree. Had she not a duty here? It seemed to her everything so far had been pleasure even when she called them duties. Was she to take all the agreeable things with a joy diffusing satisfaction, and draw back when her will and desires were crossed? Was it really for ambition's sake?

And how cheerfully Ray Stanwood was accepting the new life planned out for her! The care of her grandmother, and the supervision of her father's house. True she would have many advantages of society, and there would be the Amorys at hand. But was there not something finer than mere duty in it?

After all, could not duty be made high and fine and sweet, a thing one took up with gladness? For when you came to think, a great deal of life was duty one owed to parents and friends, to the world. When there was a choice between two things there could be an election.

Then she came to know of a disappointment laid upon her father, and resolved at once that she would not add anything to his dissatisfaction. She would give up cheerfully with no longing. She would make herself happy in her work here.

Doctor Carew had written a most kindly and solicitous letter to the judge after several talks with Sherburne about his future profession.

"We must not have Leonard think we have overpersuaded," Lyndell said.

"My persuasions have been mostly of the other way,"

Carew said, with a deflection of the brows that was more uncertainty than vexation. "I can see the pride Leonard would take in a son who was following in his footsteps. And whether Sherburne would be satisfied with the life that looks so attractive to him now ——"

"O dear!" and Dell made a pretty dainty *moue* that accorded well with the motion of the shoulders, "it will be our turn next to consider what is to be done with our children. I am frightened when I think how the years fly."

"We have had great comfort and delight in them, my dear wife;" and he placed his hand caressingly over her shoulder.

"But we shall have a double portion, for the twins will be grown up at the same time. Only the girls do seem to get ahead of the boys."

"The refining process begins a little sooner."

"Go and write your letter," the wife said with pretty peremptoriness.

The letter had given Judge Beaumanoir a heartache. Not altogether because his son's path was likely to diverge, but that so far he made no further mention of any decision since he had changed his mind about a literary professorship some months before. It pained him not to be first in his son's confidence. He would have felt angry if it had been any other man than Doctor Carew.

But Sherburne was having the best of good times. Everybody gave him a warm welcome, had lawn tennis parties, teas, dances, picnics, sails. Bertram was a great favorite as well. And when the two cousins came they almost ran into dissipation. The flavor of simple pleasure was not spoiled by deep-laid plans and enticing wiles to catch husbands.

"O dear!" and Bertram holding a letter in his hand indulged in the luxury of a most woe-begone expression. "What do you think has happened, or is going to happen?"

"Until it *does* happen do not despair," said Ray, sententiously.

"But it *has* happened, or the first part of it. The professor cannot come. He was to go to Labrador and the Commission has been ordered away a fortnight earlier than he expected. And now he has just been settling Mrs. Kenneth for the summer. O Ray, you ought to read what he says about Ruth Ensign, here—turning over a leaf. I suppose she is wonderfully nice and all that, but we've known so many nice girls, we have them of our own;" and he laughed mischievously. "That doesn't make up for my disappointment."

Ray colored at the praise for her kindly discrimination in choosing Ruth. As soon as Mrs. Kenneth was really settled and rested, she should write Ray a good long letter of gratitude for giving her a new daughter.

"O, you can both read it all. I do believe the professor is very much disappointed for he wanted to see Sherburne House and Beaumanoir. But he thinks we have so many young people."

It was quite a chatty letter, adapted to a boy's comprehension, and indulging in quiet bits of fun by way of comfort. They would hardly miss him just now, and if all should prove agreeable he would try to be there early in September, and Bertram could come up with him.

"I do not deserve quite so much credit about Ruth," said Ray, with a soft flush. "It was just a thought, and yet I couldn't help thinking that I should like to fill the

place if I had been—without a home. Mrs. Kenneth and Margaret were so utterly lovely through my illness. O, I do wonder if Margaret will ever be jealous!”

“She has her husband. She could not devote herself entirely to her mother.”

“And—somehow, Princess, I can’t help feeling that in the end the professor will marry Ruth.” Ray said this for her own comfort and strengthening. She had been made aware during her convalescence the year before how very easy it would be to love him, but friendly as he had been there was no peculiar sentiment in his regard. But he would see Ruth so often.

“Well—why not? Only—she seems so young.”

“About our age. And she will have quite a little fortune. She will be like another daughter to Mrs. Kenneth.”

Princess colored suddenly in spite of her effort.

“Princess dear,” putting her arm about her cousin’s waist—“are you sorry I spoke of Ruth? She was so anxious to do something that would give her a home until she saw her way a little clearer. And it would have been no use to try to live with her grandmother. Even the doctor protested against that. And Mrs. Kenneth wanted some young person ——”

“O, no, no!” cried Princess, eagerly. “We have so much love we need not grudge Ruth that, even if we are rather jealous and want Mrs. Kenneth’s regard,” smiling a little out of frank and tender eyes.

Ray smiled, too. “And whatever happens will be a lovely thing for both of them,” she said, proud of herself that she had crowded down some faintly jealous feeling. Even if any one asked her in marriage, and she had a premonition that no one ever would, she must fulfil the

duty made so plain to the two who had been glad and thankful to have her.

There was a call for the girls, and some new pleasure on hand. Sherburne seemed to think they must always be ready for any turn of fancy, and if ever there was a slight protest he said pathetically—"And when I have been away two whole years," which would have conquered the most obdurate girl.

They went over to the river for a row down to one of the islands, and on the way they picked up a few more to join them in a merry time. Princess sang for them, helped get the picnic dinner and was the brightest in remembering quotations from Shakespeare to grace the feast.

Yet through it all her heart was heavy. Some special brightness seemed gone out of the sun, though it shone over the long reaches of field and quivered about the woodlands. Now and then she lost what some one said as her thoughts wandered a little. What had happened to her!

"You look tired," said her mother, tenderly, patting the soft cheek and kissing the cool brow. "To-morrow must be rest day—the boys shall not take you out anywhere."

"I am a little tired," Princess admitted.

"And next week you are all to go to Atlantic City, when there will be more dissipation. You must be fresh for that."

Sherburne decided to go to Baltimore with his cousins. Another little plan he did not consider necessary to confide to any one.

"Sherburne," his father said, as they sat out on the piazza the last evening, "it is almost time to consider

plans for the future, if you have anything beyond vague ideas. It is time you settled to some permanency."

"I think I have about settled. I was talking with Uncle Bertram while I was in New York ——"

Judge Beaumanoir kept silent. Sherburne was a little embarrassed. He had promised the doctor he would consult his father at the earliest opportunity, but something was always happening.

"I think I shall take up medicine. Dr. Underwood and Dr. Carew set one a fine example. I concluded I wanted something with a wider scope than a professor's chair, something that brings me nearer in touch with real people. I hope you don't object?" when he waited a moment or two for his father's comment.

"I should not object to any course into which you put your whole heart and soul, and that was best calculated to develop your highest possibilities. Still, I confess frankly I had hoped ——"

Sherburne was playing with the little spaniel who suddenly bounced down the steps and uttered a sharp yelp, and he rushed to pick it up.

"I beg your pardon," as he glanced at his father's grave face. "I am afraid the law hasn't quite the right scope for me. And I am sorry if you—but you certainly can't have any objections, if—if it isn't quite what you had hoped," with the confident ring of youth in his voice.

"I shall not object if you are in earnest, and choose from firm convictions," was the grave reply.

"It is a noble profession."

"When nobly carried out—yes. Yet it seems to me there is as much call for noble minds in building up the walls of justice and probity, and quite as high problems

to solve in law. It leads to some of the best positions, some of the greatest honors, and though it may be used for perverted ends, a man can be as upright in this walk as in any other. I hoped some son of mine would take up my work when I was ready to lay it down. He would have the prestige of an honorable name, and step into an enviable connection. I can see that Bertram's heart is elsewhere ——"

There was little Larry left, but it would be years before he could make any election.

"I am sorry we can't look at the matter alike," the young fellow said, in a softened tone that he meant for partial regret. "It isn't altogether a new thought with me."

The father sighed regretfully. It had been quite a dream of late that he and his son would work on the same lines. The companionship would have been so grateful, so cheering. But he could not insist or force his inclinations.

"You will find a good deal of detail and drudgery. And it is not given to every man to come up with such bounds as Doctor Carew. Do not look at his career and idealize too much, but make up your mind to good, hard, solid work."

"O the work doesn't frighten me. Uncle Bertram said I must discuss the matter with you, but I told him I knew you would consent to whatever I had set my heart upon."

Had youth any deep seriousness of purpose? He looked at his gay, handsome son as he sat there on the step, thrown up clearly by the long ray of lamplight streaming from the window, and it brought back the remembrance of his own careless youth, of the follies even

of his two years of invalidism, his headstrong perversity, his love of his own will and pleasure. So far, though Sherburne had been rather extravagant, he had committed no overt act of folly. Surely he could trust him to Bertram Carew and his dear Cousin Dell, who had really been one of the good angels of his life, the other being his beloved helpmeet, whose trust he had never for an instant betrayed.

But he had built up a fine reputation, and he would have been glad for his son to come after him and reap its advantages. Yet he said graciously :

“Whatever you feel equal to, that is the right thing for you to undertake.”

Then he went in for comfort to the sweet wife of his youth.

CHAPTER VII.

ACCEPTANCE.

THE consciousness that was a long time coming to Princess Beaumanoir, that filled her at first with incredulity, and later with a protest in which was a delicate half shame, stole over her at last with a convincing force. All the year she had been dreaming of some one's commendation. She had been striving to reach heights that he had approved and thought worthy of one's best and truest aim. Was it not to come nearer to his fine standard that she had wanted to go on in the ways of fascinating knowledge?

She had been more disappointed than she would have cared to own, than she could have owned to any human being, when Professor Kenneth's visit had been delayed. There had been so few crosses in her young life, every thing had gone smoothly, joyously, and at first she felt bewildered, almost indignant that any one should suppose the grave self-centred man deep in the beginnings of the world's history should stop to care for any girl. But Aunt Millicent *had* suggested it a year ago, and after all, what more natural than that it should be Ruth Ensign? He had seen so much of her this summer. And Mrs. Kenneth was very fond of her. She just fitted into the place, which must have been made hers from the beginning.

Everybody thought so, it seemed. Grown-up eyes

must be wiser, eyes that had not lost themselves in the fascinating radiance of dreams, could see more clearly. She had been half asleep in the enchanted land of possibility, and now she roused herself with a resolute shake. She could almost wish she were Bertram, going to see him every day, to study, to be helped onward in the attractive realm of knowledge. She could spend evenings then with Mrs. Kenneth and watch happy Ruth, sweet and smiling—any girl must be proud and happy whom the professor loved.

For herself, she had made a mistake and almost fallen to coveting what was her neighbor's. But it was a thing one could live over, put away with swift hands like any other temptation. She was too healthily toned to brood over such a thing, once convinced.

If she needed any other tonic draught she had it in Ruth's letter. They had not gone far away this time, to a pretty little settlement on the ocean side of Long Island, a great, old-fashioned, roomy house, where Mr. and Mrs. Drayton and the two children would come presently and Mrs. Mallory with her two. The Carews were to take a yachting tour up to Newfoundland; two of the children had been rather ailing and the doctor very tired out. Of course Princess had heard all this news at first hand.

There had been some lovely letters from Mrs. Phillips, who was very happy. And Professor Kenneth had stayed three days getting them settled, as he had to go to Labrador sooner than he expected. They had been out rowing one day and were caught in a shower, but she had not felt afraid, and though it was rough it was grand as well. He had brought them a plentiful supply of books, and he would come to them at once on his return. Life

was so glad and full that sometimes she was afraid she had more than her share.

All that God sent was her share. There had been many dark days in her eighteen years. Now the sunshine and smiling skies had come, and Princess was glad for her friend. She would never envy her again.

They had a gay, happy time in the city by the sea, when the cousins were all together. They sailed, they promenaded, they made sketches, they danced in the evening and older people looked on and wondered if they had ever had such a good time in their youth.

Sherburne Beaumanoir was a trifle annoyed by Miss Maurice's answer to his note. It was not curt, rather too business-like and evasive. After that he dared not take in the little town, for he was a gentleman.

He was lounging on the sands one afternoon beside Princess, to whom he had just brought a handful of letters.

"This is from Ruth," she said. "And O, this is from Kitty Saxon."

"And is there one from the other girl—that came to your luncheon in New York?" asked the deceitful young man, in his most indifferent tone.

"Miss Maurice? No. She is a queer correspondent. She did write me one letter a day or two after she went home. O, I believe I have not answered it."

"You naughty girl! What is her home like?"

"They live in an old, old house that belonged to her mother's father——"

"Then she had a grandfather?"

"O yes. They are old Delaware people. You know there are a great many nice, comparatively poor people scattered about the world."

"Yes, my dear young mentor. But her folks were able to send her to school with the aristocracy, it seems."

"The way it came was this. I suppose I *may* tell over the story, since she did not make any secret of it. I think she is very honest. And it was delightful that she should meet Mrs. Townsend."

Sherburne was much interested in the school episode and the marriage of her sister.

"I suppose the home isn't——"

"Things go at very loose ends, I fancy."

Princess colored a little, thinking of Uncle Con. That was his secret, and she had no right to even suggest there was a secret.

Sherburne comforted himself with the thought that Miss Maurice had a good deal of pride and her home was not quite what she would like to invite curious eyes to inspect. But she need not have minded him.

"O, look at this," exclaimed Princess, a few days later, holding a paper in her hand. "Mrs. Townsend has gone to Chautauqua. She is to speak in two of the courses. And I suppose Miss Maurice went with her."

Sherburne was devoted in an amusing fashion to Pearl Amory, who was proud of her good-looking cousin.

Princess found Ned Beaumanoir very entertaining. He could talk to one girl very well, and he knew so many curious things, even if he did not shine in general society. But Sherburne soon became a prime favorite, and was in great demand among the girls outside of cousinly lines. Bertram was hardly old enough to enjoy the badinage, but he did like the sails and the rowing, and the walks along the beach. He often coaxed Princess to accompany him. And he let her read the professor's letters, which were full of entertainment.

"He seems just like another boy with you," said Princess, with a soft smile in her eyes.

"He is. A splendid, wise big boy that you can never bother with questions. If he can't talk about the subject just then, he gets you a book to read about it. I don't see how he can remember so many things. And if I wasn't myself and going up to Columbia College, and *had* to be a girl, I'd just like to be Ruth Ensign."

Princess felt a sudden heat in her cheeks.

"Wasn't it queer that we should think him old up there on Melchias island?" Then Bertram laughed. "But I am glad I don't have to be a girl, though you are so sweet, Princess. Boys have such jolly good times, and they don't have to think about growing up and putting on long gowns and doing their hair. And when they are as large as Sher and can do as they like ——"

"He hasn't all the rights. I believe you have to be twenty-one to reach a state of independence."

"But papa doesn't decide for him any longer. Now if he had thought *I* couldn't go to Columbia, I suppose I must have given in ——"

Sherburne had not given in to his father's desires, Princess remembered. She had hardly wanted to. And just then she had a girlish idea that she ought to help make up for the other disappointment. She had been finding duties toward Bertram. And there were three younger children. Surely there were duties enough.

Mrs. Osborne had decided to leave Violet for the winter with her uncle and aunt. Even now Mr. Amory gave her an hour's lesson every day in painting, and not only that, but a walk and a talk about nature, and the continual variations, the solemn beauty of the night, the changeful brilliance of the day from glowing sunrise

to golden sunset, the curves of the swelling and retreating sea with its crested foam or melancholy music of regret growing fainter and fainter, the long stretches of blue-grey expanse that met the curve of the other blue. She had so many artistic thoughts, such vivid appreciation—if he could rouse in her the true artistic ambition! Could one so inspire a girl?

For the girl's heart turned to fun and pleasure and pretty gowns, and what Washington would be in the winter and the dances and merrymaking.

"I'm glad I haven't any genius," Pearl Amory said, frequently. "I shall not have to make efforts to reach up to grand heights, but just sit gracefully and talk in my most fascinating manner."

"And draw admirers to your feet. You do love to be admired, Pearl."

"I am afraid I do," shaking her head in an expression of assumed penitence, as if she were really confessing. "I don't know why I shouldn't. I am human and can appreciate it. What good does it do the sun if you go in raptures over the sunset, and does old ocean ever stop to thank you for all the sentiment wasted upon him. He is like the rain, he falls on the just and unjust alike, but what is worse he devours them without mercy, while the rain only leaves them drenched and dripping. And no matter what sonnets you may write in his honor, or how exquisitely you may paint him, *does* he ever thank you?"

The girls laughed.

"But I have heard that admiration was very bad for girls," returned Violet, sententiously.

"Then you must not excel in painting, or you will surely get a dose of it. Princess, if you are a college

girl some one will come along and admire your attainments. Think of the snares and temptations that beset a girl ! ”

They did not lay it much to heart, however. They were not quite full fledged society girls, and enjoyed the delights with youthful zest. Having a train of boys of their own they were quite independent. Mrs. Amory was anxious to put off as long as possible the real entrance into young womanhood.

But the weeks passed rapidly. Mrs. Amory desired to make a little visit at home, as Millicent and Mr. Drayton were to come for a fortnight. It was always so pleasant to meet in the dear old place that held so many tender associations, though each year Millicent saw changes. Her parents were quite elderly people. Leonard was touching the borders of middle life. She herself was a grandmother, which seemed very odd to her. For with her two young children time seemed to have run back.

They all said—“If Dell were only here.” They talked of the years that had slipped by with few changes, except the inevitable growth, the growing out of babyhood for the children, the added years for those who were children only such a little while ago.

“Dell and the doctor have not taken a real journey together in a long while,” said Leonard. “They have been very busy people. I am glad they have had to enlarge their borders—get a new home that will give them more room in which to enjoy things. And the children are coming on apace. It seems natural for Dell to be the mother of babies, but grown men and women ! ”

“ ‘We have our day and cease to be,’ ” quoted Millicent. “And the others take our places.”

“I just wish Sherburne would take mine,” said her

brother, with a touch of disappointment. "If I didn't know Bertram so well I should be almost jealous. And he really advised against Sherburne's fancy. I do wonder if the boy has any stability? There are so many of you in New York to make it delightful for him, there is so much to see and hear. Well," with a sigh—"I remember when I was stirred with the inconsistencies of youth."

"He certainly will not go astray under the doctor's fostering care," said Millicent.

"It isn't that. If I could trust him two years abroad, I surely can trust him there. But it gives me a presentiment that half of my life-work will be useless. I shall have to wait years for another son to grow up."

Yes, the defection had gone deeply. Millicent felt very sorry.

They had all been interested in Dell's new house that had been talked of for several years, but the Carews had not the courage to start until it had become a necessity, until indeed they had outgrown the old one. There were so many tender recollections about this one. Bertram's pride in providing a home for his young wife when he had almost urged her to give up her birthright, and he was struggling up to eminence and corresponding fortune. It had seemed almost extravagant then; but he had been more than satisfied to do all for her, even if she did not stand in need of his strenuous efforts.

There had been the journey through Europe made doubly delightful by the enjoyment of his father and dear Aunt Neale. The birth of the twins, the second home coming, the widening sphere, baby Honor and Reese, and after an interval little Florence who still held the charm of childhood. Once Bertram had gone out to California to inspect the philanthropic settlement that

had been such an interest to them all and was now a pretty town with wise restrictions. They always talked of other journeys they would make together when the cares of a busy life should be relegated to other hands, and the children a little more grown up.

The Draytons had been abroad for a year, and come home with the freshened atmosphere, full of the wonderful changes there as well as at home. But life had seemed so rich, they had no lack of enjoyment, hardly indeed time to enjoy the feast spread out on every side.

In the spring the new house had materialized. The trend was further up town. Business and crowded apartment houses had rendered the neighborhood less desirable. And up here on the high ground one had the prospect of the river and the dusky hills on the other shore, with their wooded slopes and pretty towns half hidden in greenery. The park would be below them now. All around was refinement and quiet.

And now there would be room for the two boys, whose loss in the home was just beginning to be appreciated. School and university had been borne with equanimity, but this would cause more of a pang.

"Still, I am glad Dell will be like a mother to them," Tessy said, consolingly.

Bertram came in with a letter one morning.

"Professor Kenneth has returned to the city," he announced. "He is going out to get Mrs. Kenneth and Ruth, then he comes to some kind of a meeting in Baltimore, and runs down here, and will take me back with him. And what *do* you think—" the words tumbling over each other—"Mrs. Kenneth has asked that I may spend a week with her and the professor. He wants to be quite sure that I shall stand well with my classes."

"She is very good," said his mother. "Only she is not much used to big boys —"

"But she's used to the professor."

"He is such a quiet gentleman."

"Well, I'm not noisy when I am lost in a book," protested the boy, laughingly. "Of course when I am out of doors—but there is no out of doors in New York except parks, and there they don't allow you to 'make the welkin ring.' Princess, I know you'll envy me Mrs. Kenneth, and maybe Ruth."

"I am not going to envy any one," the girl returned, cheerfully.

A few days later she had a letter from Ruth Ensign. The weeks had been delightful, and Mrs. Kenneth had improved wonderfully. She talked of making a journey to Sherburne House in the winter, and she, Ruth, would be gratified beyond measure to see the place that had been the centre of so many joys and romances. They would have several days with the professor, whose trip had not been all rest, and then he would take them up home and get them settled before the real work of life began.

"Can you ever imagine what all this is to me," wrote Ruth. "It was delightful at school with you all, and that lovely summer I can never forget. I think I came near to envying the girls with such mothers as you all had. For my own dear mamma and I had led such a cramped and starved life that though love kept alive, it hardly had a chance to grow, but was like the poor pale grass that comes up between stones in the shade. O, how can any one crush out all the joy and blessedness for the sake of hoarding money! Sometimes, Princess, I am so sorry for poor grandmother, that it seems as if I ought to fly to her and devote my life to her, but she has

never loved me, for she was angry when papa married, and stormed when I was born. I know it would do no good, and that she thinks more of my earning a little money than all the care I could give her. And Mrs. Kenneth is so gracious and sweet that I couldn't help loving her even if I wanted to. And she is quite sure she will want me to go on and on—what do you think she said a few days ago? until I was married! I suppose it would be delightful to have a home of one's very own, but I have a feeling that I should like to have Mrs. Kenneth in it. Sometimes I dream of such lovely things that I am almost frightened. Yet the wildest things *do* sometimes come true."

Princess could guess what the dream was. Did not every girl have thoughts of a home of her own? She would no doubt have it some day.

Years hence;—she owed her mother a loving duty, and now that Sherburne had in some degree disappointed her father, he would need her daughterly consideration. Would it really benefit her to go to college? She knew her parents were not in favor of it. She could diffuse more real happiness by staying at home these few years, and then she could look out at life more clearly, and understand her own needs.

She saw how it would be with Ruth. There was a little pang, but she had father, mother, and home, while Ruth had never known a happy home until now. It would be sinful to envy her anything.

So Princess Beaumanoir took up the duty that lay before her, and tried to put every feeling of sacrifice out of her mind. What was she sacrificing, really? For if she wanted to excel in anything, there was her music. She could give a great deal of pleasure with that.

Ray had gone to Washington. They were to have a pretty cottage quite in the suburbs, and her father wanted her opinion on a good many things, it seemed. He was so glad to have his daughter. And Aunt Violet had promised to look after her pleasures.

"I find I am to be quite head of the house," she wrote to Princess. "Grandmamma gives up in a sweet old lady way, and declares the house is mine and papa's. We have such a nice middle-aged woman and her son, a young lad of sixteen or so, who is a little lame, but very willing and obliging and handy as a girl. Indeed, his mother treats him almost like a girl. Grandmamma's room and mine connect, and the doors are open nearly all the time. O, I wonder if I am too happy? I have learned so many lessons the past year, and so many lovely things that seem to frame in the days as if they were pictures. Is it because I have found the true work of my life?"

Princess read the letter to her mother.

"It is so curiously joyous for Ray. After that summer of tragedy I was afraid she would never be light-hearted again."

"Ray has had many sad things in her life."

"And mamma, I have never had one real care."

Princess looked up with a smile, her eyes soft and shining.

"My darling, I hope you never will have many. I suppose very few lives are entirely exempt. I have had very few, and a great deal of happiness."

Leonard had called his second girl Lyndell Sherburne, and the last-born after his favorite sister.

"There will be Dells and Millicents to the end of time," Lyndell Carew said, in a tone of bright amuse-

ment, but she was glad to be remembered for her own self.

Dell was fourteen now, almost as tall as Princess, which was not saying much, and growing so fast that she would soon overtop her. There had been a governess for the three younger children, but she was married in the summer. Dell was too young to be sent to school, the boy would go in to Ardmore and be with other boys. He was copying his big brothers too much, his father said.

"But there will be no big brothers for a long while," said the little mother with a sigh. "A week or so at Christmas, and then nothing until next summer."

"I am almost angry with Sherburne. The fellow has such a fine logical mind. I was struck with the way he was arguing the other evening. And he is *not* a born doctor."

"But the association with Doctor Carew—who certainly was born for the science of medicine—"wistfully and with a mother's hope.

"And Doctor Underwood." Then the judge laughed. "I'm not sure but Fanny has the pick of husbands after all. And medicine like theology, to be taken in the right way, needs enthusiasm, belief, purpose. There are plenty of indifferent clergymen and doctors, but I want Sherburne to stand at the head. Bert will write books some day and lecture and pick out the beginnings of things from the time when the earth was without form and void."

"Remember that Sherburne is still very young," said the little mother with tender persuasiveness.

"And look back at my own indolent self-willed youth! But I did one grand thing—gave them the mother they have," and he kissed his wife tenderly.

"I am going over for the professor," Bert said the next morning. "If you and Dell can go I will order the big carriage."

"Yes, I have a little errand at Aunt Fanny's. I will stop there while you go over to the station."

"It looks more welcome-y," and Bert laughed. "Sher won't be home until dinner time, and papa has an opinion to make out. How he can make it out of whole cloth ——"

"You will understand presently."

"O, *we* always have something to go on," returned the boy loftily.

Tessy kissed the sweet, grave face. How strange to see romances in the far future for *her* children, who were a crowd of babies only a little while ago!

CHAPTER VIII.

GETTING SETTLED.

PROFESSOR KENNETH had gained a little in flesh and changed mysteriously. The near-sightedness seemed at a first glance the strongest link to connect him with the grave man they had met at Melchias island. He reached over and took her hand. She was very quiet in aspect and said they would all be glad to see him, and took her seat behind her brother.

"I half mistook this young lady for you," he began. "She was such a little girl a year ago."

"But I remembered him," said Dell, triumphantly, "though he isn't so thin. When you lived with the Esquimos ——"

She stopped and turned very red.

"Did you want to know if he ate blubber?" asked Bertram.

"No, I never had the courage to undertake that, though on a few of our outings we ran short of food and went hungry for awhile."

"Was it awfully cold?"

"Not as cold as it will be in winter. We did not go quite up to Hudson's bay."

"O, I do wonder if I can go somewhere next summer?" exclaimed Bert, longingly. "Did you ever want to go on a North Pole expedition?"

"I have not had any longing that way yet. I must

confess I am not an intrepid explorer. 'There are so many near-by things I have not half exhausted.'

"I suppose Mrs. Kenneth is settled again," Princess said in the pause, while Bertram had wandered in mind to the open polar sea.

"Yes, we have the same apartment. It was all put in order and Mrs. Drayton had secured a competent servant, so we went to living at once. Long Island seemed better than Maine for Mrs. Kenneth. She has improved wonderfully, although I think Margaret's happiness had something to do with it. For a year or so she had been making up her mind to give up her daughter and not mar her loveliest years. Then she learned there were other sweet willing girls in the world. Ruth is like another daughter. I sometimes wonder how she will part with her. But then Margaret will be home."

It was all planned out. Princess must learn to be glad for Ruth. Her life had always been rich and delightful with love, Ruth's dreary with covetousness and hatred.

It was a lovely day and the drive inspiring. The professor noted the grand old trees, the profusion of the clinging vines and the flowers. And there was the old house he had heard so much about, where he was given a cordial welcome.

Of course Bertram took possession of him. He had so many things to tell him, so much to show him, and he felt somehow that he had the first claim. Two or three girl friends came over to take tea with Princess and learn a little about lawn tennis, so she was quite engrossed. Sherburne returned with a friend, and the evening was spent out on the wide porch. Princess seemed to shelter herself under her mother's wing, had she some vague presentiment, the mother wondered.

She settled it for herself that night. The wide full-moon made a silver shower in her room. Sometimes she shut it out; to-night she was not sleepy and she liked the company. It was almost like the finest human sympathy.

It was not at all unlikely that many girls had an ideal in youth and were strongly attracted. Mamma said she had never cared for any one until papa came. But he was such a handsome young man, and he was Auntie Dell's dearest friend. Aunt Fanny laughed about trying on loves, and papa said Aunt Fanny had been a sad flirt, but she *did* love Doctor Underwood, and Princess thought him very fascinating, though he teased a good deal.

And she was still so young. There would be a great deal to do with her life. She could wait the few years until some one came to claim it and ask her to make a new home with him. She would not even dream of a "might have been"; it would not be fair to the man who would come presently, to remember she had allowed herself to dream vain and envious dreams. She must keep a pure white soul until that day.

They were over to Beaumanoir at luncheon the next day and the professor was very much interested in the charming old people who were living their young life over in their children and their children's children. Then Doctor Underwood dropped in and insisted they should take supper with him. These people were so delightfully hospitable. And to-morrow he must visit the hospital, which was really a flourishing institution.

Professor Kenneth had been to the northward and westward, and gone down the Mississippi, but this was a new region to him, and everything in the natural world appealed to him. The manliness of Judge Beaumanoir

attracted him as well, and Sherburne's youth and brightness was like the sunshine itself. How proud a man must be of such a family! New instincts and hopes stirred his very soul. Science was not all. It was a grand thing to be filled with the breath of human life.

He had spent the four days of his delightful stay, and on the last night it was unsatisfactory to him. Had he been so engrossed with books and studies and young men that the other part of life, the art of winning love had entirely escaped him? Was he older than his years? O, how had he the temerity to dream of this young girl! They had seemed to come very near on the old island where they first met; even a few months ago the distance had not appeared impassable, but now—what kept her so far off?

And she was still so utterly sweet and lovely. Such a winsome daughter, such a tender, ready sister with infinite patience and consideration. But he was afraid now that he had not the divine art of winning love. What if he should be called upon to lay aside the fascinating dream and confine himself to science all the rest of his life! O, he could not without a bitter disappointment. The longing had entered his life, and he did not want to thrust it out.

Yet—he was older than his years—older in a woman's sight, perhaps. He could be young with boys. Why he had learned to be young with all that crowd of merry boys and girls on Melchias island.

Had he any right to take this beautiful girl life out of the garden of promise, where it could bloom abundantly and bear choice fruit, and shut it in a narrow place? He had not thought of that before. Yes—it was selfish.

If he had known girls and women better, he would

have understood that love could transfigure any life when it was elected king. But he had never speculated upon it, and now he stood quite dismayed at his own temerity, at his alluring dream. Even Mrs. Kenneth had said months ago—"I don't see how you dared!" They had not reverted to it since.

Yet her mother surely had not thought it such an impossible thing or beyond the bounds of reason. Only Princess *had* shrunk from any near approach on his part; she seemed to evade every opportunity of being alone with him; she had answered almost indifferently when he suggested she should come up to New York with her brothers. There had been no eager talk about knowledge and improvement and all the world's richness standing ready to be gathered by longing hands. She was the sweet, winsome daughter and sister, but not even inspired with the old friendliness.

Some other fond eyes had been watching Princess with trembling, half-jealous scrutiny. The dainty reticence and evasion of anything like a *tête-à-tête*, the quiet aspect of the girl surprised her mother. Was it that she was too noble, too innately wise to foster a regard that could come to nothing? Was she so utterly fancy free? And why had she given up the college project so easily?

Then Tessy recalled the fact that she and Cousin Ned Beaumanoir had seemed wonderfully attracted toward each other. Would that ripen into something deeper? She sincerely hoped not, though she liked Ned very much. Was it giving Princess that delicate self-appropriation that comes with the first dawning of preference to every one but the coquette? For it was plain to the mother.

The luggage was all ready in the hall. Bert was im-

portant. Sherburne serene as befitted a young man to whom traveling was no rarity and who had gone from home on longer journeys. The judge was to bear them company as far as Washington. The breakfast was early, but Princess and her mother graced it.

The children came down and were running to and fro with their good-bye kisses. Eric Kenneth envied the recipients. How delightful to be set in a large family ! He was going away with a heavy heart.

"These few days have been a great enjoyment to me," he said, taking Mrs. Beaumanoir's hand. "You need not fear but that I will look after Bertram quite as if he were a younger brother. And if I have been foolish to hope that so sweet a flower might bloom for me, it has at least shed a fragrance on my life that I shall not willingly let die out. I shall even cherish the mistake, and keep her in my heart until some worthier man finds the royal road to hers."

It was worth the confession to have the sweet mother look of sympathy that softened her eyes like a mist of tears.

"You take my sincere regard with you," she replied, when she found her voice.

Then the carriage rolled away. She placed her arm about her daughter's neck, but Princess stood rather stiff, still looking out on the drive.

"How much we shall miss them ! " but the girl's voice had a constrained sound.

"Yes," answered the mother, and they walked within, Princess distant instead of desiring sympathy.

Two hours later Sam came back with the mail.

Mrs. Beaumanoir glanced over her letters. A long one from Lyndell Carew, one from her own sister, Den-

sie, a happy wife and mother, some invitations, and one she read with a sense of disappointment.

"Just listen, Princess," she exclaimed. "Aunt Milly's nice girl has had all her plans changed. Her mother is going to marry—is married now, to an old friend who is to take them both out to a Texas ranch. Her mother would not go without her. But what are we to do for a governess? I was depending on her. I wonder if Aunt Milly knows?"

"I dare say she is hunting up some one else to make good the defection. We cannot quite blame the girl. I have a fancy I should try to follow you."

Princess gave a soft laugh as she glanced up.

"O no, I do not blame her. 'The man, the lover,'" with a half smile, "came on quite unexpectedly."

"I shall have to play governess awhile. Why not all the winter, mamma? It will keep me from getting rusty."

"But you are to go to Washington and have a season with Aunt Violet. And they will want you in New York. Princess, you are to be a young lady and have a good time with the other girls."

"Why not a good time at home?"

She glanced up to meet her mother's eyes, but some half enquiry in them caused hers to waver and droop.

They went about the day's occupations. Princess had been teaching her sisters for the last fortnight.

They sauntered upstairs now to the little study room. The house was very quiet. After an hour the children were dismissed for a run. She had a letter to write to Kitty Saxon, and before it was finished the lessons began again.

There were but four of them to lunch. Aunt Fanny

came over to take Dell and Milly out with her two little girls and keep them to tea.

“The doctor liked your friend so much,” said Fanny. “He thinks Bertram is fortunate to be under his care. And I suppose he will keep a kind of steady eye over Sherburne, who seems very fond of fun and frolic, and if it didn’t sound so wretched I should say females, for the sake of the alliteration. Half the girls around here are in love with him. It is fortunate for his peace of mind that he has to get down to real study.”

Tessy smiled, but did not reply. The children ran out eagerly and called to the two cousins. Fanny chattered a few moments longer and then went on with her drive. She would have gone to the moon if she could, for her children, and yet they were not spoiled enough to be a trial.

It was still warm, and Tessy suggested they should take their sewing out on the porch. Princess was embroidering some exquisite wild roses.

How quiet they were ! Princess had no tender confidence for her mother, no sorrow that her soft tones could heal. But she knew she had given something out of her life, just as one cuts off the first bud of the rose. The others might be larger and richer for it, but no one could ever know what sweetness was infolded in the bud.

Some of the young people came over in the evening, and they had music and talking ; but the chief plaint was that Sherburne was gone. They should miss him so everywhere. Why couldn’t he stay and study with Doctor Underwood ?

“There would be the lectures. And there was so much going on in the city.”

Princess kissed her mother good-night and went to her

room. The two candles on her table were lighted, the curtains drawn. It was essentially a girl's room. She took up her *Imitation of Christ*.

"Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth."

The supreme comfort was that there were many kinds of love. And if one gave away this precious thing!

The boys went straight to Aunt Lyndell's; Mr. Kenneth to his sister's. The evening was a little cool and there was a log fire in the sitting-room, a real cheerful blaze; and the lamp lighted under the kettle to make him a cup of tea. He was being spoiled. And though they sat there past midnight talking of the enjoyable Virginian home and the people he had met, he had no sweet hope to pour into her ear. She was too delicate to question him. Had it all come to naught?

But work began in earnest now. Bertram was eager for it. Sherburne was at least interested.

Lyndell was engrossed in getting acquainted with the new house, she told her husband, and the big children. They seemed to have kept mysteriously small in the old house, and now the twins were sixteen. Millicent, a fair, rather shy, gentle girl, with soft dark eyes more like her godmother's than her own mother's, Randolph, for though he had his father's name also, they never called him by it, but left it exclusively for Leonard's son. He was a bright, laughing, heedless young fellow, who considered athletics the great thing of life at this juncture. He could study, but he was not fond of it, but he adored his father if he did not take his counsels to heart. Honor, the second girl, was like her mother, prettier than Dell had been in childhood, a merry, charming girl, not quite fourteen,

but almost as tall as Millicent. Between Reese and Florence there had been several years, and she was rather small of her age.

The house had been built to grow in, and now suddenly they had grown. What with the two additions, it seemed to abound in boys. The third floor was devoted to them, even Reese considered himself manly enough not to have his mother watch over him, though he was a little homesick at first, missing her mysterious mother ministrations. He had grown quite accustomed to it on the yacht, but it did not seem altogether the thing at home. But then he was such a big boy!

On one side of the hall the doctor had an office and study, a commodious room that really showed some empty book shelves. There was a drawing-room large enough for a considerable company, a music-room and conservatory.

Aunt Neale had grown very feeble with the advancing years, but the doctor seemed robust enough to round out a century. They had their two rooms over the study and office, the other side being devoted to Dell and the girls, with room for a girl guest when the cousins came.

"It is like beginning a new life," said Dell, with a half sigh. "O, I wonder if there can be sixteen years of pleasure and happiness and no sorrow to mar, like the sixteen years that have past. It really seems as if no one had had any serious misfortunes, except Cousin Archie. But Ray is such a sweet affectionate girl, he will take great pleasure with her."

"We have all been wonderfully blest. Like Job, we have had sons and daughters, and prosperity, and honors," with a twinkle in his eye.

"O, I wish you had not quoted Job."

"There is no room for superstition. And Leonard has been quite as fortunate as we. And Paul Amory. Do not let us spoil our living and our new home by dreading disaster."

"There will not be much time with two new boys. Bertram is such a favorite of mine. I hope he will inspire Randolph. Sherburne is charming, but ——"

"Well, but what?"

"I have a feeling that he is—rather uncertain. O, suppose he should follow in Cousin Gilbert's early steps!"

"Nonsense! do not think of such a thing! He suggests his own father to me. And though Len did not have the noblest beginning he has made a really grand man. Few have his high integrity, his broad scope of thought, and he in turn has many of his father's traits."

"Many of Aunt Laura's as well. Bertram, we shall begin to reckon on heredity," and the half smile curved her lips with a piquant grace.

"I have always reckoned on it in a way. I have never believed God created a man for some particular sin or weakness, and gave him no corresponding grace or strength. We swing too much to the side of fatalism, or pantheism," and a little dent of protest came between his brows. "I object to a God being in everything, and you having authority over the God, when you do not even govern yourself."

Lyndell was reflecting. She remembered when she had been dipping into the strange knowledges of the world and following the "Lo here," and the "Lo there:" a restless young woman, with the idea that she must keep pace with her husband's intellectuality. That was before the babies came. And she was glad now she

had not been a weak and silly mother. True, the twins had been so divided up between their grandparents, she stepping tenderly aside that they might have an unqualified joy, but since then they had been all hers. She had not lost interest in the world's progress. And now that there were so many on the threshold of life, she was very thankful.

"What are you thinking of?" her husband asked, noting the changes in her face. He was fond of studying it. "Dell, if these boys are to add a big burthen to your life, I shall be sorry I consented."

"When the burthen gets too heavy we can shift it on Millicent. She would have taken both boys. Only I wanted Bert. He is so wise and steady and studious. And Randolph ——"

"Don't set him Bert for a pattern. If there is anything the average boy hates, it is being desired to look up to a boy of his own age. I am afraid Randolph will never be an enthusiastic student."

"O," cried Dell, disappointedly.

"My dear wife, can we reasonably expect all the virtues and graces and wisdom in our eldest son? I know father counts on his carrying down the honors of medicine. I have discovered already that eager as he is for all kinds of bodily feats, he shrinks from physical pain, and we all remember, as a little boy, wild and rough as he was at times, he never tormented a cat or a dog."

"But Aunt Neale was so tender. And you know you were always strict on the question of cruelty."

"Yes. A doctor either gets hardened, or tries in every way to lessen physical pain. I shall have to confess that I have never yet subscribed entirely to the theory of the divine mission of pain. It is true I have known

some great sufferers who bore everything with an almost divine resignation, but I have known about ten for the one who made their family or their wives suffer vicariously. Then as to whether God sends these things as the older people were trained to believe ——”

“O Bertram ! Shall we accept good at the hands of God and not ill ?”

“Half, nay, more than that of the world’s ills come from what the poet terms ‘man’s inhumanity.’ Hundreds of accidents could be prevented by a little carefulness, a little expenditure of money at the right time. We huddle people in noisome holes where the air is foul, the light scant, each one with his share of disease, and make a propagating house. Then we take them out and fill our beautiful hospitals where it is almost heaven itself, and do our best to cure them, spend our time and energy and money, and return them to the same vile dens. Do you suppose God is answerable for all our sins and blunders that we know are such, and yet will not take the pains to remedy ? My dear, I am wasting my lecture knowledge on you when you know it all of yourself. And we have wandered from the boy. Let him follow the bent of his own mind for two years more, and then decide. There may be another lad to uphold family dignities.”

“O the little children ! I have taken so much pleasure in them !” Dell’s tone was a cry of longing regret. “We have been so happy. Shall we leave the joy in the old house and begin with the cares here ?”

Bertram put his arm around her and drew her down to his shoulder, kissed the face that had grown nobler and sweeter with the years, and yet held the charm of “his father’s little girl.” There was an infinite comfort in the

softness that irradiated his face like the sun half veiled, half peering through drifts that were hardly clouds.

"My dear, as I remember we were not all wisdom ourselves in those early years." Then the smile came through and disclosed the tender lines the years had brought. "We made some mistakes. 'The world was too much with me late and soon,' and fame held her dazzling lure before my eyes. We skirted close to the thin place. It was a useful lesson. It has made me more considerate of the mistakes of others, and some absolute sins creep in from a mistake. So we will not expect these young people to be alive with wisdom, and have it ooze out at every pore. Youth is so charming. We will do our best for them, and trust to a higher power. And if they do not fall in with our ideas we must see what virtue there is in theirs."

"But you fulfilled your father's hopes," she said.

"Life was so simple in that pretty country place among people of refinement and education. And I was my father's companion from babyhood. I inherited a gift for surgery. My father never tried vain experiments. His theory was to be useful to his fellow-creatures. You see there was such a little variety. And Millicent was the lovely girl friend of us all. Randolph has more girl friends to-day than I had in all my young life. Milly and Tessy and you. Ah, they were delightful times."

"And I used to think—Tessy was so restful. Why did you not ——"

"Because I fell in love with you. Because you were father's girl. It did trouble me at first because you had so much money."

"And you have not allowed me to spend it!" in a half-complaining tone.

"No, not on me. Any man who takes a woman's life and heart and soul, ought to care for the garden in which he sets it. But I certainly do not restrict you at present. Only—do not let the children get into the way of thinking that money is the chief good."

Yes, she had her own way largely now. She did want the children to grow up in a refined and beautiful home. Sherburne had elected this for his home as well, and then Bert would not be crowded out. Leonard and Tessy were more than pleased with the arrangement. Mrs. Kenneth was not far away, the Draytons a little farther. And the Mallorys had come up town. Miss Phillipa had slipped quietly out of life, and the elder Mr. Mallory was taking things easy, delighted with his grandchildren, and very much in love with his son's bright, affectionate, joyous wife.

Adrian Mallory said—"We must have that young Sherburne in now and then. All you mothers will have to keep a watchful eye on him, there are so many charm-ers abroad."

"As if a young man couldn't take care of himself," retorted Nora.

Adrian shrugged his shoulders and lifted his eyebrows, suggestively.

"He is a handsome fellow, an attractive one, as well. Isn't medicine a dangerous profession for him? Women have a weak spot for their doctor and their clergyman."

"Yes," returned Nora, laughingly. "We have all set our affections on Uncle Bertram. And Auntie Dell never gets jealous. She must have been born for a doctor's wife."

Perhaps she had been born for Bertram Carew's wife. Sometimes Dell remembered when she was one of the

Murray children and went to school with them, ran and played and whooped and shouted and was brimming over with life. Yes, childhood was gladder and freer and richer then. And there was a young medical student pushing up to the front ranks that his father might rejoice in his joy. Neither knew about the other. It had taken Sherburne House and no end of curious events to bring them together, and here they were in the grand old city with all those years lying behind them, and new duties changing every year ahead of them.

She had taken her way about the new house. Not but what treasures of art and beauty had been added from time to time, but the babies in her own house and the babies elsewhere, as tenderly loved, as sweet and adorable, and the others who never knew what real mother love was like, some times crowded out the finer living, such as Millicent and Mr. Drayton made. But she never envied them, for was not Doctor Carew the one lover of her life.

Sometimes, and it came to her quite forcibly just now, she had wondered how she would do when the children were growing up, what plans she would have, how it would seem to be the mother of tall sons and daughters, who were to be placed in the world. And the time had come.

She had a feeling ever since her twin boy had smiled out on the world, that he should be a physician. He had his father's name and his grandfather's, and he would naturally follow in their footsteps. A little persuasion on his father's part might settle his aims in these plastic years. She wanted Bertram to have the sympathetic delight and companionship his father had taken with his son. She understood Leonard's disappointment, and

would fain have persuaded Sherburne to the other way of thinking.

Then she recalled the crossed purposes of her own childhood. No, she would not interfere. They should have this lovely home and their mother's affection to take out with them in the big world, whither they must all go. Since poverty would never narrow or thwart their lives, mistaken endeavor should not do it.

CHAPTER IX.

A TOUCH OF NATURE.

WORK began in real earnest for everybody after the long summer holiday. Mrs. Townsend settled herself next door to Mrs. Kenneth, to keep house and see what it was like. It was furnished, but she had some choice belongings that she never relinquished, and that gave her an at-home feeling. And she was glad to have Mrs. Kenneth for a neighbor.

"I think there must have been the pick of the world in that school of Mrs. St. John's," she said to Miss Maurice. "What a charming little body that Miss Ensign is! And there were all the other girls. I thought them so engaging that day of the luncheon. I am going to have some social life this winter. I sometimes think I will marry again just for the sake of having a real home. I could travel about a little and come back. But then you would want some other woman who just suited you," reflectively.

"Do husbands just suit you?" asked Miss Maurice, archly, a half smile making doubting lines around her lips.

"You are very much in love when you first marry, unless you marry for money, and a woman generally thinks her lover perfection. It is quite a while before she gets disenchanted, and then the step is irrevocable. So if you want to be happy, pick out the best traits he possesses and adore them."

Gertie would have liked to ask whether Mrs. Townsend had been disenchanted. Her husband had lived five years. But the Sherburne people were all lovers still.

"If you were five and thirty I should ask you to cast in your life with me, only I should like you to be as young as you are now. I am fond of youth, then I am fond of old age. It is the between times that come hard on a woman."

The between times would not need to affect her much, Gertrude thought. She had abundant charms, fresh complexion, brilliant and moving eyes, when she talked in real earnest, fine conversational talent and a kind of radiant exuberance that never became effusive or tiresome. She could marry again easily.

"And thirty-five is the time a woman gives up whatever dreams she may have had?" ventured the girl, inquiringly.

"At thirty she has a little fear the right man will not come along, and questions whether it may not be better to marry the wrong one. Five years later she has ceased to discuss the wrong man with herself or married him."

Gertie laughed a little.

"I am very fond of young people. I should have been mother of a family. Then, as you have learned by this time, I am also fond of social life. I think I will begin by receptions. Two this month, two next. Let us make out a list, and see how many acquaintances we own. I will be first in the field."

Gertrude sat down at her desk. They had a pretty recess-room fitted up as a sort of library.

"Some of these people are not in the city now, but will be later on. And the gentlemen will be glad of a

little entertainment, especially the newspaper men. And put down that young Beaumanoir."

Mr. Murray's name was among the newspaper men. Gertrude had not seen him or Sherburne since her return to the city.

"Now I must consider who will pour tea and coffee and chocolate. You can have your choice."

"Coffee," replied Miss Maurice, with admirable promptness.

"There is that Miss Wyman who really has a poetical gift and is coming up in the magazines. She shall have the chocolate. And a married woman to pour the tea. I shall ask Mrs. Drayton to help me receive. Now write it out for the printers and send it off. And men say women are not expeditious!"

There was nothing on hand that evening and Gertrude went in to Mrs. Kenneth's. The two Beaumanoirs were there, and Sherburne evinced his pleasure at once. They had several songs, Gertrude playing accompaniments.

Ruth left them alone at the piano, presently.

"Why did you not allow me to come?" Sherburne asked, abruptly. "I began to think I should never find a way to see you."

"It was not convenient in the summer—I suppose that is what you refer to?" briefly.

"Yes. Are you going to stay in the city?"

"I expect to—through the winter."

He nodded approvingly.

"May I come and call upon you?"

"You will have a card for the receptions," she said.

"To begin with the New Year?"

"Next week." There was an amused smile playing about her lips, and an odd light in her eyes.

"I shall be there. You are sure you are not ——"

He glanced into her eyes so eagerly that she flushed.

"I should not jest in that fashion."

Bertram had been inspecting some new specimens with the professor. Now he rose and came forward.

"Miss Maurice, won't you sing some of those jolly songs we had at Melchias? Mrs. Kenneth, will they be too noisy? We won't roar them out as we did on the beach. What fun we did have! I should like to go to Melchias again."

"I do not believe I shall mind the noise. I never get tired of hearing about the island."

"Uncle Con is an awfully jolly fellow," declared Sherburne. "How I did envy you all. I should have turned green if the boys had not come out."

The songs were merry enough. One was a part song between a mermaid and a sailor. Bertram had a good deal of voice yet, and took the sailor's part, a poor sailor who was at last inveigled under the green sea waves by the mermaid with golden hair. And somehow he quite crowded Sherburne out with his prior claim.

Ten o'clock was to be ordinary hours at Doctor Carew's. Bertram was first to remember.

"And I have stayed unconsciously," declared Gertrude. "Dear Mrs. Kenneth, have we set you wild with our youthful folly?"

"I have enjoyed it very much. Come in often."

They both escorted Miss Maurice to the next door stoop, but Sherburne insisted upon using her latchkey.

"O," said Mrs. Townsend, "you are ten minutes too late. Mr. Murray has been here the last hour. He has been off somewhere to a convention and just returned this morning."

"And his two nephews were in Mrs. Kenneth's."

The girlishness had not all gone out of her face yet. She looked sixteen. Mrs. Townsend studied her with a new interest.

The first reception was a brilliant success. Mrs. Townsend stood on the border-land. She had a long train of ancestors behind her, she had a good income and many social advantages. She sifted out undesirable acquaintance in her gatherings, and there was a certain elegant propriety observed; but she brought people together in her fine, friendly manner who were glad to know each other. If she took up some poor, struggling artist or author, she made sure beforehand that he would not rail at the customs of refined society in her drawing-room, but give and accept those graces that were tonic and reviving. That she should lecture and speak at public meetings and be interested in the great questions of the day was put down as one of the entertainments of a woman who had nothing else to do, and who really enjoyed admiration.

Gertrude had the flower of the men coming and going about her table. The coffee was excellent, and she managed the accessories with admirable grace. Mr. Murray brought an English friend, but though he confessed a fondness for tea, was tempted by the fragrance of the coffee, and the bright, piquant manner of the girl who poured it.

"I was sorry to miss you the other evening," Mr. Murray said. "Do you know that I have had only one glimpse of you since we came home from Maine?"

"One?" She asked it reflectively.

"How many do you count up?"

"I had—not thought— You see I went home, and

then to Chautauqua and Niagara, and we have not been long in the city."

"I don't need to ask whether you like the secretaryship?"

"Perhaps you can read that in my face," turning it to him with a spice of bravado. She felt strong enough to do it just now.

"It is a joyous, contented face," he said. "I am very glad you have been happy."

"One could not help it with Mrs. Townsend. I feel half the time as if I was playing at earning my living."

"You are having too good a time. I think I shall get some newspaper work for you to do. You will become enervated by all this ease and luxury and admiration."

"Mrs. Townsend has not dismissed me yet, and I surely shall not leave of my own accord."

He laughed a little. Two or three others came up, and then some women gathered about to hear Mr. Murray talk. He had the art of attracting men as well as women, and since the masculines seemed to converge at this point the butterflies came also.

Gertrude was quietly gracious. She had never seen Mr. Murray at such a decided advantage socially, and a strange sense of his superiority pervaded her.

Now and then she glanced up when a new throng entered. Was she expecting some one, he wondered.

The some one did not come until after Mr. Murray had left with Mrs. Carew and Mrs. Drayton. Some of the younger men were lingering, but when Sherburne Beaumanoir entered he seemed to add a distinction to youth and good looks.

"O," said Mrs. Townsend, "two of your aunts and

your uncle have just gone. And there have been some pretty girls. Miss Heath," to a young lady standing near, "will you show Mr. Beaumanoir around a little. Like the famous Alice he may like to be introduced to tea and coffee."

Miss Heath convoyed the well-dressed and well-mannered young fellow hither and thither, quite proud of her charge. No, he did not care for tea. Coffee was his favorite. And then he greeted Miss Maurice cordially, and lingered so that Miss Heath bade them a reluctant adieu, summoned by her aunt.

"I thought I should never get here," Sherburne began, hurriedly. "A dozen things bothered. The perversity of inanimate objects is sometimes past belief. And now it is quite late. May I sit down by you and sip my coffee leisurely?"

"Certainly. Have you been studying hard to-day?"

He made a dainty disdainful gesture. "I have been bothered out of my wits and had an extra lecture from uncle."

"I hope you haven't come up to this great human hive to sip drone's honey? You may starve."

"Then I shall fly to you. What comforting coffee! Now isn't that better than if I had said delightful?"

"I remember comfortable was one of your pet words. The other is next of kin, I suppose?"

He flushed slightly with the pleased vanity of a young man that she should remember anything he had said.

"And a biscuit!" handing him the plate. "Or almonds. I am not sure, but the best of my wares are gone."

"So long as you are not gone—" laughingly.

"I am a fixture."

"Then I shall come in to see you often."

"Often?" She raised her brows but looked amused.

There were no more guests to welcome. Mrs. Townsend came over to them with a Mrs. Jay, who knew all of his relatives, and had met his father in Washington.

One and another went away. Mr. Fielder was staying to consult his hostess on an important matter. She looked at her watch.

"You had better remain to dinner, if you will accept my informal invitation," she said. "It will be served in fifteen minutes. I will ask the young man also. Three are a rather awkward party."

The young man was most happy. The fates surely had befriended him.

It was a cozy dinner. Mr. Fielder and Mrs. Townsend discussed sociology, the young people flitted from one thing to another and found much amusement. Afterward they had some music and Sherburne sang several German songs.

"He is a really delightful young man," said Mrs. Townsend. "And I hope a good student."

Miss Maurice seemed in such a whirl that she did not fall asleep in her usual quick manner. She rambled over the rocks at Melchias, come to think about it there were a good many walks together, and, curious talks. It was not all nonsense either, though sometimes it was difficult to tell whether Mr. Murray was in earnest. She had flirted a very little with Ward Garrison until she found him verging to the sentimental side, when she had made a jesting matter of it. She felt inwardly that Mr. Murray approved of this course. She *did* care for his approval. Of course, having come on his niece's invita-

tion, aided and abetted by himself, she was too just to do anything that would offend any one. That Bertram should be her shadow was simply amusing.

On the yacht she felt the indescribable difference in his demeanor toward her. They had all been children on a summer frolic, now she was in a slightly altered position, nearer womanhood, a young girl studying the future. And when one of her letters brought a disappointment he remarked it.

"I am the most unreasonable creature in the world," she said to him. "I simply hate the idea of teaching school, and it is the only thing for which I am fitted. I hope the prospect before me will fail, and when it does come to nought I am bitterly disappointed. I have to take up another, and either they want half a dozen things I am not a proficient in, and a college degree, or else the work is hard and the salary meagre, and I hold off for something better."

"There is office-work, how would you like that?"

"I could write letters—yes, I think I might do office-work—but how would I get the office?" and she looked up with such a droll, mock-serious expression that he was amused, interested. "This is a case where the office doesn't seek the man or the woman, but there are dozens of applicants for every place. I dare say you know all about that. I don't like the work-day world. That's a tremendous heresy in this enlightened age of woman's progress; isn't it? I am fond of ease and leisure. If I had the voice of your lovely Princess I should go on the stage; if I had Miss Osborne's genius I think I would work my way up somewhere. I really would have courage. And if I were as beautiful as Pearl Amory—can you guess what I would do?"

"What?" He asked it in a curious tone, doubtful, with a laugh at the back of it.

"I should marry a rich man. There! I have poured out the inmost recesses of my soul to you. I shall be high-minded, virtuous, and heroic, because no temptations will come in my way. And now you can put me in an article under the caption of 'Girls I have known.'"

"An honest girl," he made answer. "Though she does not take a very high estimate of her abilities."

"But I have no abilities. My education has been hammered into me by hard work. I cannot be enthusiastic over the things I don't like."

"What about the things you *do* like?"

She laughed instead of answering. There was a soft flush in her face, a vague mistiness in her eyes, and a little quiver that remained about her lips after the laugh had gone.

"I learned long ago not to cry for the moon," she said, feeling that he was waiting for a reply.

"The true philosophy of life."

Then they paced the small deck and exchanged bits of badinage with the others they met.

After that talk they seemed on a different footing; he more serious and friendly, she with a feeling that he knew her triviality and lack of ambition, and her true estimate of herself.

Now and then Con Murray wondered he had *not* married. All the other children were settled in homes of their own. His parents had gone back to their first love, a pretty suburban cottage and one servant. Mr. Murray still kept a business interest, and his advice was highly valued. The children and grandchildren came out and made visits. He often ran out and spent a night and de-

voted the morning to teasing his little mother, who never ceased to bewail the fact that he wasn't married.

There had been plenty of opportunities. But when he came to the serious point, he *was* fond of his liberty. And at this crisis some journey loomed up attractively. There had been several intense fancies in his youth, but in every instance he was glad later on that he had not yielded to them.

He ought to marry some refined, rather sedate, society woman, who could still shine when occasion offered, yet who could be content with home joys and let him have his own way pretty well. And yet—he was so fond of girls, real girls with whims and wants, the delicate withholding, the generous giving, the charm that gets toned down presently—the seductive charm of youth. And he was so ridiculously young! He still had a boy's exuberance. He would like to gather half a dozen girls in his home and give them a good time, let them dance and be merry with the blessedness of the magical time that flies too swiftly. Why had it not flown with him?

If Princess would come and have her young friends about her! But Tessy wanted her this year. Few of the girls would be in the city. And Dell's daughter was shy and quiet, young for her years.

He liked Gertrude Maurice very much. He should not spoil a brilliant future for her if he did take her into his keeping. He knew a great deal about girls' lives and the mixed motives of their marriages, and he had an old-fashioned notion that most of them were better off in homes of their own, even if it was not an ideal home.

He watched her when she was not on guard, for there were times when she wore an impassive front or shielded herself behind a mask of ridiculous gayety.

He guessed presently that both were used as a sort of guard. He had written to Mrs. Townsend about her and advised her to refer to Mrs. St. John.

Then came the last evening of their return journey. To-morrow they were to part, or she was to part with them, and go back to the dreary round, immeasurably worse for this grand holiday, she said in the bitterness of her soul.

He had not meant to ask her now, or in this mood. Indeed, it was more of a suggestion than asking, but she had replied so quickly with a kind of breathless intensity that almost confessed while it denied. Every feeling of honor rose up to strengthen her. And in his heart he really respected her for it. Neither would he take an advantage. If she did not accept Mrs. Townsend's offer, he would then hunt her up and insist upon her accepting his.

A little later he had an interview with Mrs. Townsend, who had written to Freeport, very well satisfied with Mrs. St. John's commendation.

"Con Murray," she exclaimed, with a kind of shrewd mirthfulness, "I believe you are interested in her yourself. If she comes to me, I shall have her sign an iron-clad agreement. There must be no philandering, no letters, no anything. I want her for a year or not at all."

"Well, have a care that no one else comes along to philander. Bring her back to New York fancy free. I trust you, you see."

"You are a foolish fellow to choose that way. And so young a girl."

"I like young girls. I'll tell you in a year's time whether I have chosen or not. And she may find some one more to her fancy."

“You are a flirt of the deepest dye.”

He nodded humorously.

There had been a great many things to occupy his year. Hers had been full of variety and satisfactions. He had kept his word, merely hoping in his occasional notes that her secretary was doing well, and being as briefly answered. And though circumstances had seemed rather untoward through the summer, there would be all the winter. He had wondered a little if he had not been overhasty, but when he met her, he resolved to abide by his first impressions. Miss Maurice had acquired many society graces and learned to make much more of herself.

It had been a puzzle from her point of view. A more sentimental girl might have dropped headlong in love. She had stood off warily from a fine self-respect. And even now in these few interviews she could not decide upon the nature of his regard. He must be used to women's attentions; she would not fall down and worship him. She had a curiously resentful feeling. And now she understood that this young Sherburne Beaumanoir admired her immensely. If she wanted any little—well, retaliation, for she did not feel sufficiently vindictive for revenge, she could let this go on awhile. It was only a boy's fancy. Young Beaumanoir would have dozens of them before he settled to the real love of his life.

If people were still lingering in country houses, there were enough in the city to set all kinds of enjoyments astir. Theatres, concerts, art receptions, club openings, driving in the park, small dinners, dances for young people, shopping and calling.

Mrs. Townsend had her hands full. It was understood that she was always at home on Friday evening. There

were no special invitations, and one and another brought in a friend who had something to contribute or who wished to enjoy. Miss Maurice was quite indispensable on these occasions. She fulfilled her social obligations with grace and ease, she brought shy people together who might have looked longingly all the evening at each other and gone away hungering.

Mr. Murray brought his nephew—he did try to capture the professor, but in vain. He was rather startled at Sherburne's appropriation of Gertrude, and the pleasure the two seemed to take in each other. Yes, she was young—and if some young men— But then Sherburne was not eligible; he was a mere boy with hardly any plans to life; and years of study yet before him. Of course a serious thought was simply ridiculous, and he laughed at himself. Let them have their gay time.

Gertrude Maurice studied herself in the glass that night, before she removed the withered flowers at her belt, or the pins from her hair. She had grown better looking. Her complexion had cleared up a little, though it could hardly be called fair, but her eyes were undeniably fine, dark and lustrous. She had learned how to use them. The great coil of light hair was almost a crown, the chin and throat had rounded out. She was not as thin as she used to be, and the freedom from worry, the enjoyments and delight had given her spirit and vigor. She held herself erect, but it was with a grace and not stiffness.

"I do not need to worry," she said to the girl in the glass, "I am young and everything *is* pleasant, really better than traveling about so much. I even think I might marry well presently, though there is no hurry. I shall just enjoy things ——"

What she said down in her heart was—"He was amusing himself in that old time, men often do. I was wise. I have kept my friends and done nothing mean or underhand. I do not suppose he will ever marry—that seems to be the general impression about him."

Princess had written a dainty little note to her. She felt they ought to be real friends again, and the very next morning Gertrude answered it, while the spirit of delight was still strong upon her. She made people as real with her pen as when she talked about them. The Kenneths and Ruth, their own pretty rooms, the reception and the evening, Sherburne and Mr. Murray, the beautiful home of the Carews, and the hosts of big boys, the delightful weather, the drives in the park, the exhibitions that seemed always opening. She ought to be here in the midst of it all.

She would like to be there. She had settled matters, and given up what was not for her.

"Aunt Violet has some plans for you, for us all," said Mrs. Beaumanoir. "I am glad that Miss Mead is coming so soon; and if I like her I shall feel quite free. And we will see what papa says. Aunt Violet wants us to come for a fortnight—she wishes to include you in her bevy of pretty maids at the reception. And we ought to go and visit Aunt Julia."

"Yes," Princess rejoined. But she did not feel very eager for the gayety.

"Was your letter from Aunt Lyndell?"

"O no. Miss Maurice. It is so bright and chatty you must read it, mamma. I should spoil it in the telling," and she laid it in her mother's lap.

Mrs. Beaumanoir perused it, smiling and making running comments.

"I am quite longing to see Auntie Dell's house. How good she was to take in the boys! Bert is so happy. There seems to be a colony of them, and no grown-up girl to temper their exuberance. But I do think Sherburne is pretty gay for a young student. Yes, Miss Maurice writes charming letters."

Princess had taken up her embroidery and seemed to be diligently inspecting it. Mrs. Kenneth and her household had come in for a bright picture and a veiled suggestion. Would it affect Princess? What was in her mind, for surely it had once been all in her own hands if she really cared.

"I am like Aunt Lyndell," she said at length. "I am almost sorry to have the children grow up."

The judge said they must go of course. Violet planned to have the girls simply dressed in soft white silk. They would not indulge in expensive finery this winter while they were "buds."

Miss Mead, the new governess, came to hand and was a very agreeable person, hardly thirty, with both dignity and good breeding. So there was nothing to prevent their going up to Washington.

Pearl was full of eager delight. Washington would not be at its gayest until after the holidays, but it was gay enough. Congress had opened. The weather was magnificent.

They found Aunt Julia very happy, and Ray sweet and gracious.

"To think of four girls making their bow to society," she said, gayly. "Aunt Violet has a good deal of courage. But there are so many 'functions,' that I doubt if she could get us in one by one. And you can hardly imagine how important I feel as papa's housekeeper, as if

I had grown half a dozen years older. Aunt Lyndell said she had all the boys up there and we had all the girls down here, and that it was hardly fair."

It was a very attractive home. Violet Osborne had sent her two paintings, one a bit of Melchias that Princess recognized at once. Pearl had sent her two splendid sofa cushions. Uncle Winthrop and his wife had been their first guests, and they had brought some exquisite china.

"It is almost like being married," said Ray, with a bright smile, "perhaps as near as I shall ever get. And there have been so many friends of Aunt Julia's. One lady, a Mrs. Galbraith, has a beautiful house and horses. Twice a week she sends the carriage over for us. When she has time she accompanies us. I seem right in the midst of lovely living, and I was afraid I had left most of it behind."

"All living is lovely when the heart goes in it," said Aunt Tessy.

Her heart had gone into this, Ray knew. She had taken it up as a duty she owed; she found it a pleasure. She and her father were growing into finer accord. She could understand so much more of his life and the great sacrifice he had made; the useless sacrifice.

Aunt Julia was glad enough to welcome them, and wanted to know about the New York contingent, though Lyndell found time in her busy life to write charming letters to the first of the Sherburne aunts she had learned to love. Millicent did not neglect her either, and her two younger sons joined heartily in adding to her happiness.

Amory House was a scene of delightful confusion. It had enlarged its borders since Violet came there a

happy young wife. Then they had seemed in almost a wilderness of greenery, now streets had reached out to them and they were no longer hidden from the great city of the land, growing more beautiful year by year. The studio had a wing to itself and an entrance that was quite stately and held two or three receptions of its own in the course of the winter.

There was a fine conservatory as well, and grounds that were beautiful from early spring to near Christmas. Violet Amory had been very happy all the years of her married life.

CHAPTER X.

A FLOCK OF GIRLS.

A FLOCK of girls surely in their fluttering white gowns and ribbons and their charming youth. No one was envious that Pearl carried off the palm. There was a steady procession, and every one was fresh and amiable and did not grudge compliments that had not had long enough society usage to become hackneyed to the recipients.

But the delight of the girls was the ball of the evening. There were young men in plenty, the music was enchanting, and the dancing sheer fascination. What hosts of memories it called up to Judge Beaumanoir of his own youth.

"If Lyndell could only have been here," he and Violet Amory said almost in a breath.

"Violet, are we getting to be middle-aged people with all these sons and daughters? Sometimes it seems such a long while since Dell first came among us."

"Years and years. Yet I can recall that first night, and how she has won love from all of us."

"And worthily," he added, with deep feeling.

"Now the gayety and gladness have passed on to our children. I hope they will be just as happy as we were."

They certainly were gay and glad and danced to their hearts' content. It was quite the event of the early season.

And then Uncle Beaumanoir made them happy again

by a very delightful dinner and a theatre party afterward. Aunt Julia's friend, Mrs. Galbraith, gave a little dance for Ray. She was very fond of young people.

They were fain to keep Princess over Christmas, but there were so many things to do and the children would need her. Then the boys might come home. Millicent and her family would keep the feast at Beaumanoir. Leonard insisted on the boys accompanying them. Bertram agreed at once, but Sherburne rather demurred.

"Of course you will go," said his uncle.

The Carews asked in the Kenneths and Miss Ensign, as they seemed to have no family to gather about them.

"Everybody was inconsolable," Pearl wrote to Princess. "Quiet little body that you are, you really made a conquest of that Mr. Sevier. He had asked so particularly about Sherburne House, and how you get there, that I think he must meditate coming, unless you appear again on the scene of action. And I receive invitations for you frequently. We were all four asked to a dance and a special figure in the german was arranged in our honor. Mrs. Galbraith consulted mamma about a musicale in which she wanted you to sing.

"Papa scolds a little about the dissipation, and says Violet will be ruined if this goes on, and she was beginning to paint so well. I am glad I have no particular genius and can indulge in pleasures without stint."

"She ought to go up again," said Judge Beaumanoir. He was very fond of having his pretty daughter admired. "And—" with a queer little hesitation—"what of the lover whose eagerness seems to have died out. Has he gone back to his first love—science?"

He glanced at his wife with a half smile in which there was a trace of annoyance.

"Whatever has happened is due to Princess," said her mother. "And if she should prefer freedom and gayety for awhile we will not blame her."

"I'm not blaming her. I want her to have some bright, glad youth. There is no zest like that of youth, and there is no time when one so thoroughly enjoys young pleasures. One gets a broader outlook with the years, and the responsibility of life dawns upon the more experienced vision. I remember what good times we had in our youth, and Sherburne House was a synonym for enjoyment."

"I wish there could be no thought of marriage for a long while to come. I did not want Princess to begin life so early. Well, I may have my wish."

And yet she felt sorry for the grave and high-toned man who had awakened to the possibility of a happy satisfying existence. She wondered a little how she had come to understand and like him so well, that there should be a slight pang in his disappointment, while she was glad to keep her child. How complex one's feelings were!

They were all glad to have her back. Miss Armitage said —

"You could not have given us a better treat than to come and help us with our Christmas music. I wonder if you *do* realize how much joy you can give with your singing."

Was it not her business in life to give joy wherever she could, and not take away the gladness illumining any other soul?

Sherburne made a plunge into the country gayeties. There were parties and dances, and it was flattering to have two or three people fighting for him, and

consulting his convenience as to what evening he could give them, and expressing regret that his stay should be so brief.

Judge Beaumanoir watched his son with rather apprehensive eyes. But had there not been a time when he was quite as pleasure-loving, quite as careless of the future? But somehow he had come to look upon Sherburne as a rather intellectual young man, a son he was to be proud of, a good student, who would make his mark. Doctor Carew did not write enthusiastically about him and this was a source of secret mortification.

"I hope you are doing your best," he said to him.

Sherburne made a dainty inscrutable gesture, which might mean many things.

"I have been skirmishing about the romance of medicine," he replied, lightly, "and it is like playing the piano by ear for your own delectation. But when you come to the real drudgery, it is not all rose color. Uncle Bert has set me at the drudgery in the beginning. Of course I shall fight through—but one must have some relaxation. And there is time enough."

Bertram had shot up into a tall lad, and even if he was bookish, he was a great delight to the younger children with his fresh, eager interest in everything, and his cheerful good humor. He and Princess had delightful confidences. The evenings at Aunt Millicent's were enthusiastically described, and the pretty brightness of Ruth with the motherly sweetness of Mrs. Kenneth.

"And everybody hopes you will come up for a visit," said the boy, eagerly. "Indeed, I really had strict injunctions to bring you. We could have such a good time. Princess," humorously—"there ought to be two of you."

"Twins," said the sister, laughingly.

"But twins are not alike. Randolph now is a big, breezy fellow, just a little rough, but good-natured, and Milly is such a shy sort of girl, always wanting to shrink away in corners and not caring half as much for fun as Honor. Honor is going to be more like Auntie Dell, but Milly has such lovely golden hair and great dark eyes that have a startled expression in them. She doesn't look any more like Ran than a dainty, delicate star looks like a great full moon when the man is in it. And if you had a twin I should want it to be exactly like you, or else I should take you. Princess, why can't you come?"

It was very sweet to be wanted. She smiled gratefully.

"And you can't think how elegant it is at Mrs. Townsend's. They have 'evenings' for almost everything. The professor goes once in a while. Uncle Con is there very often, and I do think Sherburne is quite struck with Miss Maurice. She's ever so stylish, and changed somehow, just bright and witty, and not afraid of anybody. But we boys can't have much of her, you know."

"I should think not, with all your lessons," said Princess, with a pretty show of authority.

"Well, there are lessons and lectures and what not for Sherburne, but he seems to put in a deal of other things. People ask him everywhere just as they do here. I suppose it's being grown up—and good-looking," and Bertram made a comical face before he smiled.

The holidays were very bright and enjoyable. Princess found so much work to do. Were people more easily pleased in this simple life, or was she taking hold of some of the mysteries and evolving that greater enjoyment,

blessedness in giving herself, her very best, just as freely here as in the great world.

It was not quite so gay when the boys had gone.

"Wouldn't you rather go up with me?" asked her father the evening before his departure. "The girls will want you, and there are so many pleasures to enjoy."

"I am going to stay at home with mamma a little while," she answered, softly.

But it was only a very little while, for this time Pearl wrote a moving letter.

"We are all moaning for you. The 'harbor bar' is nothing to it. And if you do not want us to make perfect wrecks of ourselves and go drifting down the shores of disappointment bay, you will come at once. I thought the quartette had a rather ridiculous side when we were all out in our best finery at mamma's tea. But it seems that we invented a new custom. There are three houses that insist upon having us in full force, and you will get a letter from Mrs. Galbraith explaining her plans and desires. She has such a beautiful home, and really I think she has been quite smitten with us all. She takes Aunt Julia and Ray out in her carriage, and every few days she is over to the studio. There's a dainty little bit of Robin's Point that Violet painted, and papa says it is really well done. She wanted to buy it, but papa persuaded Violet to send it home. He did not want her to sell any pictures just yet, and he said if she let that one go she would begin to have orders, and she was too young and would be spoiled by flattery and never realize that she could and ought to do a great deal better. See what it is to be wise and under teachers and masters, and to be giving up heroically, and submit to the discipline of work. I am glad I have no genius, though I think I have mentioned

that point of thanksgiving before. But what do you think Daisy, the little midget, did a few days ago? though I believe she was a week or two working at it. She wrote some little rhymes, very cute, too, and made pictures to suit with pen and ink. Papa thought them wonderful. We may have a family genius after all.

"You may see I am not practiced at letter-writing. I ramble from scene to scene, and forget my starting point. Mrs. Galbraith will explain to Aunt Tessy's satisfaction I hope. Do you remember Mrs. Rheid, whose one son is private secretary somewhere, and the other a cadet at Annapolis? The cadet has a furlough or a vacation—has been slightly ill, and will be home a fortnight, and she wants us for the dance she is to give the boys, all of us, the unbroken quartette. Mamma sent her to Uncle Beaumanoir, and there are so many pleasures you must remain a full fortnight, and help make the quartette a signal success."

Princess went to her mother's room with her letter in her hand. She looked up in bright, amused inquiry from one she was reading.

"O mamma—is it from Mrs. Galbraith?"

"Has she written to you?"

"No. This is such a long, chatty letter from Pearl, who always detested letter-writing. You must read it. She speaks of Mrs. Galbraith's invitation."

"That lady's note is quite charming. She wants you to sing at her musicale, and asks that you may be her guest for a few days. I am always sorry for the people who love girls and have none of their own. She seems to like Ray very much. I am glad Ray is getting to be such a favorite. I suppose you will go?"

Princess smiled a little.

"You think I ought?" She had read assent already in her mother's face.

"And here is another reason," looking up with a quick light in the soft motherly eyes.

"Mrs. Rheid is quite delightful. And she wants a daughter instead of two boys. Mamma, it *is* nice to have a good many."

"Yes, dear," returned the mother, with a sweet satisfaction. Her six were none too many. If some of them went out of the home circle others would grow up to fill their places. Even a larger number had been no detriment to her own mother's household.

There was a curious little question cropping up now and then in the mind of Princess Beaumanoir. She was very fond of Miss Armitage, who was on the rather heroic and conscientious order. She had had her day in youth, and the sun had dropped suddenly down and left twilight. She had devoted years to her mother, who had faded away like a snowdrift, and gone in a night. There were her brother and her church left, and they became all to her.

"It is almost the doctor and Miss Neale over again," Ardmore people said.

There was no sharpness in the sweet low register of the voice, no frown had been allowed to settle in the face, the mouth was gravely sweet. A woman doing her duty in that state of life that had come to her, sweet, cheerful, and never discouraged with small results. Princess wondered how she could so relinquish any personal desires. She did not realize that between eighteen and forty many desires have been gratified, many over-lived, and that some of the lost sweetness of youth was found again in riper middle life. But one of the perplex-

ing questions of a conscientious young girl was how much of herself belonged to the world, how much to the vineyard wherein all were workers.

The next morning's mail brought a delightful but rather peremptory letter from her father. She was to come at once, and take another taste of youthful pleasure.

The children lamented loudly, and the little cousins at Aunt Fanny's joined in the chorus.

"Princess is a lovely girl," Aunt Fanny said to her mother. "But that is no reason why she should be mewed up in a little round and miss the delight of youth."

So Princess started on her journey, and was met with a host of welcomes. And there were invitations enough to last one a month at least. Mrs. Galbraith sent for the girls to come and dine, and explained her plan. It was not to be a mere professional entertainment, but a delightful hour of music, and a luncheon afterward. Several young society girls had responded readily to the request. A noted professor was to come in and make their selections and give them a little training. A young tenor, who was going abroad presently to perfect his musical education would join them, and a choral club would appear for a number or two. Ray belonged to the club.

It was a great success. The musicale itself was given for a charity. The large rooms were filled with a fashionable audience, appreciative too. The young man's singing was delightful. But Princess was really the star of the occasion. She felt a little timid at first when she faced her audience, but in a few moments forgot everything except her own delight in singing, and her sweet, clear

voice had a tenderness in it that touched every heart. She had to sing an encore, the guests would take no merely pretty acknowledgment of their admiration.

"It was fine," said her father, who had run away from business to listen, but he would not have missed it for a great deal of business. "My little singing bird, you acquitted yourself splendidly."

Her eyes shone with tender radiance. If mamma could have been here!

The luncheon was an immense success. That was for the young people, and gayety reigned supreme with jests and merry badinage and flashes of wit.

"Mrs. Galbraith is as fond of young people as Mrs. Kenneth," said Violet Osborne. "In fact I have about concluded that youth *is* admirable, even if it does perish like a flower. Let us be sweet while we may."

They had lingered over the luncheon, then they had gone back to the music-room and were singing for Mrs. Galbraith's pleasure, when several cards were sent in to her.

"Miss Amory," she said, "will you not come and help me entertain. There are two friends of yours,—Mr. Lane and Mr. Sevier. Perhaps you might like to bring them out here."

"O yes," answered Pearl, eagerly.

There were several elderly guests. Pearl chatted agreeably a few moments. Mr. Lane's was a short society call, but Mr. Sevier, when he was gone, said, "I heard your cousin, Miss Beaumanoir, was here. It was very unkind in Mrs. Galbraith not to let us know about the musicale. I just heard of it fifteen minutes or so ago."

"O, we did not expect to call in the busy men. And it was unprofessional talent for a charity."

"I should so like to hear Miss Beaumanoir sing. She has a beautiful voice, I have understood."

"You might be allowed to come out to the music-room," said Pearl, archly. "I think you know most of the lingerers. We are blooming alone as the admiring throng are gone."

"It will afford me a great deal of pleasure."

He followed her with a sense of gratification. He had hardly expected to see Miss Beaumanoir, but he would at least learn where she was staying. Already she interested him deeply.

"A new audience," announced Pearl, with a gay suggestiveness in her voice. "The elders are discussing a reception at the British minister's, and as we frivolous young people will not be invited, there is no use in sitting down and bemoaning our fate. Let us rather take the good the gods provide, and attend to our own entertainment."

Mr. Sevier greeted the girls cordially. One young fellow, a connection of Mrs. Galbraith remained, and they had been having a frolic of words rather than music. Paul Fielding had been in clover with a half dozen girls, and now he gave a comical expression of dismay when Mr. Sevier entered.

He bowed to them all, but crossed over to Princess. She flushed with a certain pleasure, and a touch of embarrassment at being thus singled out.

"I am sorry I was not fortunate enough to be at the musicale," he said, in a low tone. "Do you know that I have never heard you sing, and everybody is talking of your lovely voice. Music is one of my chief delights."

She could understand that as she glanced up and met

his eyes suffused with a certain depth of feeling finer than mere enthusiasm.

"You will favor us again, Miss Beaumanoir," said Pearl, with a dignity that was impressive as well as amusing. "There are some entertainments that are continuous I believe, so let us institute that order of things. We may never have a better chance. I am ready to sacrifice myself on the altar of accompaniments."

"O please be good enough to accept that offer and accede to my earnest wishes," pleaded Mr. Sevier.

The girls stood around. To them their cousin's singing was quite an everyday matter. She had never made an exclusive gift of her voice. At home she had sung with the birds. At school she was always ready to do her part without considering that there was an unusual quality that placed it at the head of ordinary efforts.

And now the sweet voice floated on the air like the melody of twilight in summer, when bird and bee are hushing the tired day to rest. It rose and fell with exquisite harmony, a mysterious sweetness that touched the soul and carried it along until it seemed to find rest in some far land of peace.

The next song was gayer but the voice never lost its refined melody, and as it went dancing over forest brooks and flowery waysides where summer winds shook out dainty ripples, it was still informed with magical sweetness.

There was an interruption.

"The Amory carriage has come for the young ladies," announced the servant.

Mrs. Galbraith followed. "It has been so delightful," she began. "I shall grow younger every day that I can persuade you to spend with me; so you see what a

good work you will do. The dial is set back oftener than we think, though we cannot get rid of the years as easily as the prophet did. And I do not quite know how to express my obligation to you all ——”

“But you have given us a great deal of delight as well,” said Violet Osborne in the little pause she made. “I am sure we are all grateful for a happy day, and Princess has been drinking in the delicious draught of admiration ——”

“I am glad I had something to give you,” interposed Princess, with an exquisite flush as she took Mrs. Galbraith’s hand.

“I ought to express my pleasure as well. You have given me a great treat, only I am afraid I shall want to hear you again and again. Are you staying at the Amorys?” and Mr. Sevier’s longing shone in his eyes.

“For a week. I am to be divided between them and Uncle Stanwood,” returned Princess.

“Then may I have the privilege of calling upon you?”

There was the least little inflection on the last word.

Princess gave the permission with a quick breath as if she understood something she wished had not been there, and then colored vividly at her own thought.

The judge came over that evening to see how it had fared with the luncheon and his pretty daughter, though he had read all about it in the evening paper.

Pearl was full of interest and delight. Her mother saw with satisfaction that her beauty was not likely to make her envious of the graces and attainments of others. Perhaps as Ray had once said, she had been used to it all her life, and while she might be glad she had it, she was not continually demanding the world should fall

down and worship her to the exclusion of every one else.

Mrs. Amory was proud in a certain fashion of her firstborn, and yet she would have liked a more intellectual pose, a real interest in the deeper things of life. She understood very well that she would not have changed her for any of the girls though Princess had immense qualities of self-sacrifice, and as she knew Ray could rise to heights of heroism, while Violet had an unmistakable genius. But she was fond of beauty herself, and she had always been a beautiful woman, neither silly nor vain. And her son was bright, an eager scholar; and her pretty ingenious Daisy was growing deeper into her father's heart every day with her peculiar gifts.

"There is only one career for Pearl," she had said in the summer, to Mrs. Drayton, "that is marriage. She is not a sentimental girl, therefore much more likely to make a good marriage. And after all, marriage seems the natural destiny of women. Milly, were we more heroic than the girls of to-day? You were, I think."

"Perhaps it was circumstances and the greater simplicity of our lives. We used to talk of aims and purposes, we were so proud of Bertram Carew, and oh, do you remember what a pleasure-loving fellow Leonard was, and how discouraged and disappointed father used to feel? And we thought Ned a regular prig."

"And I remember being tremendously vain of my lovely golden hair and my beautiful complexion. Really, I cannot blame Pearl. She has not much personal vanity, it is rather an assured knowledge of her own charms. But there is something lacking to the young people of the present day," and Mrs. Amory's brow settled into thoughtful lines.

"I am sure," returned Millicent, "that Ray lived nobly and wisely through a very sad tragedy. All of life will have a higher purpose to her. And yet I should not like to see her sacrifice all her young years— O Violet, I am afraid we *do* think marriage the best career for a woman and feel a little disappointed when she does not achieve it."

"The most satisfactory career when it is happy. And many of ours have been exceptionally so. Even Ethel would have made a wretched single woman, unless she had taken up art. She really had no enthusiasm for life. I should be sorry to see Pearl repeat such a destiny."

"I do not think Pearl will. She has a great deal of human love. I know I felt quite disappointed in Nora at one time. I should have enjoyed her going to college and distinguishing herself in some branch. But when I see the strife for the high places, the ambitious envyings and heart burnings, I am glad she has chosen the ordinary course. She is a very happy wife and mother, and old Mr. Mallory simply adores her. Perhaps when we look back there is a glamour about our own youth because *we* lived it. Our children may feel the same way years hence."

"I really do think there was a higher and purer atmosphere. There was not quite such a mad whirl in society. O, can you recall your betrothal party Aunt Lepage gave? How beautiful we thought the house, and the function really grand. And now the homes are palaces, and the entertainments ape royalty. I am glad we have a position outside of mere wealth, and that I do not need to enter the lists for display. But I dread the coming winter and my beautiful daughter. I must take in the other girls to preserve my own mental poise."

Mrs. Amory was doing this quite to her own satisfaction. She found that Pearl had very little desire to outshine her cousins. She liked a good time and plenty of people to enjoy it with her, in the zest of youth. And now she came home proud of her cousin's success, and full of pleasure.

They looked over the invitations that had accumulated.

"We can't take in two for the same night, when they are at the same hour," she said, complainingly. "And O, Princess, we must go to Mrs. Rheid's. I used to have an idea that young men were of more account than girls, but you would have a dull time with only one sex."

"O, we didn't at school," declared Violet.

"That was in our salad days, when we could dance with each other and did not have to be taken out to dinner by a young man."

"But girls give luncheons and whist-parties ——"

"And dove-parties when they are about to be married."

"And you can't marry each other."

"Girls couldn't afford it. The two that agree are seldom rich enough."

"Have you any special girl in view, Pearl?" asked Uncle Len, laughingly.

"Not *just* yet. But if I was Mrs. Galbraith, I would want one. I would have to adopt her, I suppose. Uncle Len, will you give up Princess to her?"

"I think not," with a decisive shake of the head.

"She has sung her way into Mrs. Galbraith's heart."

"She sang her way into mine when she was very little."

Princess came and put her arm around her father's neck.

"And as she has never grown very large," said Pearl, "she has kept it."

"She has grown just large enough never to get out," returned the fond father.

The next morning while Princess and Violet were in the studio, Pearl lounged among the soft cushions in her mother's room, doing nothing and looking very much at home.

"Mamma," she said, "should you feel very much disappointed if I did not get engaged this winter?"

"Disappointed!" in a shocked tone. "Why I do not want you—well, you are very young and will hardly know enough to make up your own mind——"

"That is just it. I do not want the trouble of making up my mind or thinking about it at all. I just want a good time without considering whether this one or that one is eligible. There are a good many men very nice to dance with that one wouldn't want to marry. And life is more delightful if you don't have to think about it. I hate to hear the girls balancing claims and saying mean things about really nice young men, who truly may not care for them at all. So if you shouldn't mind having a girl on hand for two, maybe three seasons——"

"I shall not mind." Mrs. Amory came and kissed her daughter with all a mother's fervor and fear of the time when she should want to go out of her life. "Have your good time, dear, and wait until you understand a little more of life."

"None of us are in a hurry," said Pearl, placidly. "Ray thinks she will not be married at all. She is so devoted to her father and Aunt Julia. Princess doesn't

say much about it, and we have decided that as a subject it doesn't interest us at present."

"A very wise decision for girls not out of their teens ; "

and the mother smiled.

CHAPTER XI.

UNWISDOM.

THERE was a very bright gathering at Mrs. Townsend's. They had been discussing the art question, whether one required an education to understand it, or whether the divine inspiration was an education in itself, and whether all the glorious past of art, with the study of technique was capable of making an artist, with the hard work necessary.

Some one said genius was the capacity for interpreting the accumulated art of the past; another declared the artist must draw his inspiration from nature and work in her creative spirit if he touched the heart of the people. Mr. Murray was listening and putting in a trenchant sentence now and then.

"The worst of you, Con Murray," said Mrs. Townsend, afterward, "is that you begin by a strong leaning on one side and rejoice the souls of that party, and finish up on the other, leaving a confusion of opinion."

Sherburne Beaumanoir was always interested when party spirit ran high and most of the guests were in the centre of the room. Miss Maurice sat at the tea-table, Miss Sharply, a newspaper woman, had the coffee. Two or three tea-drinkers gravitated to Miss Maurice and made long calls. One was an artist and Sherburne had come to hate him, but to-night he was in the thick of the fray.

"I am glad you are not art mad," he said, "though I don't mind the rest having a severe attack. I could

get scarcely a word with you the other evening, and on Tuesday you were out."

"Yes. I had to attend to a matter for Mrs. Townsend."

"Are you never alone? Don't you ever have any time of your own?" said the young man in a complaining tone.

"O yes," cheerfully. "I read no end of novels in my leisure. I think sometimes I could write a very good review."

"O, leave that for Miss Sharply, with the coffee."

"The tea did not seem so attractive. I am the sort of stop gap."

"I'm glad you came over here. One can find you once in awhile."

"I can be found quite often in my proper place," with a conventional laugh.

"I wish you wouldn't put it that way. And Mrs. Townsend isn't ——"

"Mrs. Townsend isn't anything sharp or selfish or arbitrary, and everything that is delightful. You shall not say a word against her."

"I was not going to. You do take one up so. You are not as nice as you used to be."

"Am I not? I am growing older and wiser."

She was very much engrossed in balancing a tiny teaspoon on the edge of the Doulton cup. When it finally settled she very carefully dropped one drop from another teaspoon with the most delicate care.

"Are you trying a charm?" he inquired.

"Yes. Telling my fortune." Another drop went down very softly and the bowl of the spoon trembled slightly.

"That is two years," she said, recklessly, "and that three."

Down went the spoon.

"I cannot marry under three years," with confident emphasis. "I am glad women have outgrown the notion that they must be married at twenty. I think thirty would be better."

"Try it for me."

"O, you must try for yourself. It would not be your fortune."

Sherburne's attempts were ludicrously futile.

"Well, it doesn't matter," he said, in a tone of disgust. "The great thing is your fortune. And in three years——"

Mr. Murray's mellow laugh floated across to them, and there was a sudden disintegration of the group. Several were coming over for a farewell cup of tea.

"Uncle Con has won his point whatever it is," said Sherburne. "Did you ever remark how often he does it? And he isn't real aggressive, either."

"Another cup of your nice tea, if you please, Miss Maurice. And Miss Gaines will you indulge——" said one of the guests, pausing at the table.

"If you won't quote the old adage, for *I* think tea does inebriate if you drink enough. And brandy might not if you put a teaspoonful in a glass of water," returned the lady.

"Which side won?" asked Miss Maurice, with a smile that looked like fervent interest.

"O, it was a sort of draw game, as arguments usually are," returned Mr. Deane. "The ardent believers in inspiration are sure an artist must be born, like a poet, the steady going plodding people with an immense

amount of ambition believe all things possible, and often do surprise their friends by their achievements. As for me, I consider both necessary. Nothing can be done in the long run without labor and perseverance. Does making a good cup of tea come from repeated trials of how much tea to so much boiling water, Miss Maurice?"

"No," answered Gertrude. "It depends largely on the quality of the tea, and the taste of the drinker."

"Then I shall consider my taste a valuable accessory to the enjoyment. And the pourer of the tea—doesn't she come in for some share?"

"If a young man is very much in love with her he believes he is drinking nectar. Then one can use poor and cheap teas. The trouble is there are so few young men in love with one woman, that, as an economic problem, it is not a success."

"Sherburne," said Uncle Con, "have you a real delight and fervent interest in the study of medicine? If not, it will be tough work."

"Do you think I have no perseverance?"

"Perseverance and some knowledge might build a house. Still I have hopes of you. You do not write verses ——"

"But I have translated from Latin and Greek, and used my own ingenuity, talent you might call it," said the young man, a little nettled.

The guests were beginning to disperse. Those who had talked the most were declaring they had had a delightful evening and saying, "Dear Mrs. Townsend." Others waited until they were on the sidewalk to announce that they liked general topics better, there were so many opinionated people among artists.

"Come, Sherburne," said Uncle Con.

The young man rose reluctantly. Gertrude had drained her urn and declared herself bankrupt. She said good-night to some of the guests who thought her worth that honor.

Sherburne leaned a little over her shoulder. "Three years," he whispered. "I shall carry away that comfort with me."

A quick rift of color went up her face. She put out her hand to Mr. Murray without looking at him, and said good-night in a more effusive manner than she had meant to.

Mrs. Townsend still looked fresh and spirited. The maid came in to clear away the things.

"Why didn't you send young Beaumanoir to join the discussion?" the elder lady asked.

"I do not think he cared for it."

"But he may have some second-hand knowledge gleaned from his uncle. Young people amuse me, they consider their thoughts new discoveries. Well, perhaps we all do. I suppose in working over the century old ideas our circumstances and surroundings do give us new points of view, and that is where talking does one good—if you *can* dispossess your mind of the belief that our elders did not know it quite all. The arguments amused me. But I kept one eye on you, Gertrude, and Mr. Murray kept one on his nephew. Do not get sentimental over the young man."

"I am not likely to," returned Gertrude, with a short laugh.

"And now let us run off to bed, or else we shall get no beauty sleep."

Gertrude did not get any. She was thinking foolishly enough of Sherburne Beaumanoir. Not in any sense of

special attraction so far as she was concerned. She had been amused all along by his sudden fancy. That it would die out she felt assured. And yet it had not. There had been other young men who enjoyed chatting with her. And by this time she had learned that without special beauty, without either wealth or position she could marry very well. But she did enjoy her present life and her liberty.

For a month back Sherburne's attentions had been rather pronounced. Ten days before this he had brought tickets for her and Mrs. Townsend to see a new star in a play that was to be on only for a week. The very next morning tickets for the next evening had come from Mr. Murray, who would meet them at the theatre later on in the evening.

"I do suppose the young fellow will feel awfully disappointed, and we have accepted. And Mr. Murray is an old friend and a good standby. But we must not really encourage the youth in this extravagance, since his father has to pay for it. Can we stand both nights?"

The play was very well acted. Sherburne was proud and delighted and manly enough for thirty instead of twenty. And the next night they enjoyed it again, the latter half with Mr. Murray's criticisms. Then he came in and had some coffee and cold turkey with them.

Since then Sherburne had really haunted her. Was he in earnest? That startled her. Under any circumstances it would be un wisdom. She liked his youth and brightness and impetuosity with the young side of her nature, but such an entanglement was out of the question. Five years from this they would both find out their mistake if they made one, which she did not mean to do. She felt years older and wiser in experience now,

and yet she had to admit she had hardly seen as much of the world.

Underneath all there was a little sense of triumph. It was mean and unwomanly she admitted. They had all been uniformly cordial to her, and she did like Mr. and Mrs. Drayton wonderfully. Mrs. Carew was more closely occupied with her children and her charities, and somehow she stood a little in awe of the doctor.

Surely she did not want to triumph over sweet, darling Princess, who had so generously made amends for one overt look, one bit of meaning that could not have been clothed in words. No, she would rather do the bitterest penance.

Down deep in her heart, where it could scarcely make a protest, there lay the true reason—a coquette's reason. Would Constantine Murray care? Would he come to the rescue? Whether he had any real regard for her —

It was unromantic, but she fell asleep over this perplexing question, and awoke unrefreshed. Then she had a very busy day.

"You look tired and faded, Gertrude," said Mrs. Townsend, late in the afternoon. "Go out and take a good, brisk walk. It is not too late for the park if you keep in the traveled paths."

"Yes," answered the girl. There was a heavy feeling in her head, as if it might ache presently.

She walked swiftly to the park. The keen, fresh air was bracing. There had been a little snow and some of the clumps of shrubbery had a white half-circle on the north side where the sun had not touched it. The evergreens stood out fresh and courageous. There was a cold, yellow light edged with greyish lavender in the western sky, too dense for the setting sun to peer through.

She had been afraid since three, that Sherburne Beaumanoir would drop in. If Mrs. Townsend did not need her she would go around to Mrs. Kenneth's in the evening. It *was* better to be careful.

"My dear Gertrude," said a voice that was almost husky with gratification.

She stopped short. The "Gertrude" had an easy, familiar sound, as if he was quite used to it. And then he drew her hand through his arm with an air of possession.

"How fortunate I am in meeting you. Are you going on any special errand?"

It was not necessary to say he had been on the watch for the last two hours; and that for some blocks he had been keeping her in sight, wondering at her flying steps and whether her quest was an important one.

"I was out for a constitutional. I have been writing nearly all day."

"Then it is fortunate that I met you. It will soon be dusk."

"And dinner time. So I am not out for long," she returned, with a brisk kind of gaiety, and a slight effort at disengaging her arm, but he only held it the tighter. She would not emphasize it by any resistance.

"Did you dream of me last night?"

"I? No. I do not spend my time dreaming. My nights are for sleep. And when it is so late the nights are none too long."

"I thought of you before I went to sleep."

"That was the tea. And it was the reason why you dreamed."

"No, it was not," rather vexed. "I mean the tea was not. There was a better one."

"What a queer fashion—drinking tea and coffee between whiles," in a light, indifferent tone.

"It is very social. In old times people had cider, and occasionally something more convivial."

"Are you going to remain in the city during the holidays?" he asked, after a moment or two of silence, in which he felt she was really hurrying his steps.

"O no. Mrs. Townsend is due to speak at some fair or entertainment for a home to shelter worn-out and broken-down women. If she loved individual women more she would have a big house and take them in. She works for them in the aggregate. She entertains them largely for their own pleasure. And she visits a few friends out of pure delight and gratification. She has accepted two of these invitations to-day, and she kindly takes me along. Her real friends are of the delightful, lovable sort. I like them."

"I was thinking whether I would stay or not. Father insists upon our both coming home."

"Then you must go;" in a rather peremptory fashion.

"I shouldn't if you were going to stay."

"I have nothing to do with it. You are not of age and are still supposed to be under the care of pastors and masters and fathers and all your household relations."

"Why do you not go home? You are not of age, either," he said, laughingly.

"Because my father respects my business engagement, and there are girls enough at home without me. Then—I am needed."

"I wish you were not so business-y. You were your own charming self last night. And—why are you in such a hurry?"

There was a sound of imperious complaint in his tone.

"A constitutional to do you good must be taken rapidly. It is like shaking up a bottle of medicine. And then—it is growing late."

"It is dark early, cloudy beside."

"I have ever so much to say to you—" with a pause as if he was not quite ready to begin.

"Keep it until you come back from Sherburne House. If it is good it will improve by age, if of little account you may be glad you did not say it."

"I mean to say it," he began, resolutely, holding back her rapid step. "It is of great account to me. Gertrude, I love you."

She might have been wiser weeks ago. Was she altogether blameless?

"Do you hear? I love you. I want you for my wife. Your fortune last night said three years. If you will promise, I will go to work at once in real earnest. I shall have the strongest, the most splendid incentive a young man can have. I was fascinated with you that day last summer, do you remember? I've not seen any one since, indeed you have never been out of my thoughts."

"How many were there before?" she asked, in a caustic tone, giving a short, mocking laugh.

"Gertrude, you are cruel. There never was any one before."

"Not in the two German years? And German damsels are fascinating in their simplicity."

He could remember one who was very fascinating, a professor's daughter. A wise mamma had removed her from any further intimacy with the delightful American. But he never would have made it a serious matter.

"Why, I was nothing but a boy. Marriage—betrothal never entered my mind. And I am not planning marriage now. I shall wait until I have a certainty to offer you. They all like you, so you cannot urge that. Why you *were* the queen of the entertainment last summer. I saw that at a glance. Bert just adores you, and Mrs. Kenneth enjoys your visits so much. And you haven't any real lovers ——"

"Don't be too sure. Now give me a chance to talk. You are too young to consider such a serious subject. Even if you *do* love, an engagement would be the worst possible step. It would divide your interest, which you do need for your studies. If a girl loved you she would want some attention, if she did not have such a true and unselfish regard for you, she would still demand the outward signs of the inward grace. Probably in three years' time you would be mutually disenchanted. That on general principles. With me the first objection is—I do not love you. I like you very much. In my heart and with my tongue I do you full justice. You are a charming and attractive young fellow. But I am years older than you ——"

"Some months younger," he interrupted, caustically.

"Older in experience, older in heart and soul, older in all the sweet hopes and dreams and beliefs that young girls have, that are so deliciously attractive when one comes to love-making. And you do not want the motherly affection that would darn your stockings and sew on your buttons and watch the kettle between your kisses like the wife Jean Paul tells about. I can't explain it to you, but probably in a few years I should be bored with youth."

"But I should be growing older. And with Uncle

Bert to train me and keep me up to the best in manhood, for although he is exigent and sometimes brings a fellow up with a jerk, he is grand and noble. O, don't you see, Gertrude, that I could make a splendid future for you if you would be my inspiration. And if you don't love any one else ——"

What if she did? The men were quite given to hovering about her and drinking either coffee or tea when she poured it.

She was silent.

"*Do* you love any one else?" tentatively.

He drew a long breath that seemed to bring his heart up to his very throat and half strangle him.

"I have no lover if that is what you mean."

She meant her voice to be cold and indifferent, it was merely husky.

"No, that is not my question," he flung out, half angrily. "Half a dozen lovers wouldn't be dangerous to my peace of mind if there was not one among them that *you* loved. Why can't you answer the question?"

"I am not in love with any one." Her voice was cold and sharp now. "There was a young fellow at Robin's Point who used to drop into sentimentalisms, but he is married. I am not much given to sentiment myself. That is where the age of my soul or my mind, or whatever the inward guidance is, comes in. Now I have told you all about myself. Let us forget this foolishness as soon as possible, and be pleasant friends again, or the acquaintance must end."

"It is not foolishness with me as you will find, but a very real love."

"Then I am more than sorry."

"And until you *do* have a lover—oh, if you are not

thinking of any one else, can you not give me a little thought? And if I should not change except to grow manlier ——”

Gertrude Maurice wondered what decisive thing she could say. He had an infinite trust and belief in himself. And how could she extricate herself from this dilemma and keep the peace all around?

“Listen to me,” she interposed. “I have no lover, but I have an ideal—most women are foolish enough to cherish one and this is a figment of the youth that I never had. And you are *not* my ideal. But you may be the ideal of some sweeter, better girl who will give you the worship of her whole soul. You will understand better as the years go on and I dare say some time we will laugh over this episode, and you will be glad you were not led into the folly of youthful engagement by a designing woman.”

His temper had been rising and now he was angry, hurt as well.

“You may laugh,” he returned, stiffly. “But I purpose to show you that mine is something better than a boy’s love. You are not done with me.”

Gertrude had no reply ready that was forcible enough to end the matter. They walked on in silence. It was quite dark now, except for the street lamps. Then they turned the corner and here was the familiar stoop.

“Good-night,” she said.

He simply bowed and walked slowly toward his uncle’s. Somehow he was not quite dispirited, and now that she was away from him her power of conviction grew less. He had a confused notion that a woman could learn to love when she was beloved, and that steady persistence would win her. And he plumed himself on

a good deal of mannish judgment in his selection, since she was not one of the sweet, gushing, adoring sort. He liked her brightness and that air of the world and wisdom and experience. And a woman just past twenty was in the very bloom of youth.

As for Gertrude she comforted herself with the thought that young men do soon forget. She had met Ward Garrison and his wife, and they were still in the bonds of sentiment. Yet she could not help feeling a little flattered by Sherburne's preference and persistence, and the fact that he had fallen in love at first sight, and kept his regard for six months. How did she know it was not the best love of a man's life? And she *had* encouraged his attentions at different times. They had never seemed to pique the one at whom they were aimed.

Twenty was not old, but she seemed in her real living to have gone so far beyond these young people who kept crossing and recrossing her path, as if her life was in some mysterious manner bound up with theirs. How she had longed to be one of them that summer at Melchias. Perhaps then she would have accepted Sherburne Beaumanoir, if they had all taken her in cordially.

O no, it would have been unwisdom to lay a burthen on his young life, and she felt no one would have approved. But she was very lonely to-night. Once in a while the desire came to her to be very dear to some one, and she knew that was having a lover who suited her, adored her supremely. It is one of the dreams of youth and then represents the best thing in the world.

But she roused herself. She had not finished buying her Christmas things to send home. She really did not care to go herself. They were all well and Virgie was growing much stronger, Agnes wrote. And Agnes

seemed so busy, so content, so sensible, fitted to her niche without any friction. What mysterious power beside love could do this?

Luella was improving, beginning to take a real interest in her studies. Young Adams had gone to Philadelphia to be brought up in business. Elsie was taking a fancy to housekeeping. And then followed a list of the most needed things to be sent in the Christmas box, good and useful. She checked off what she had already purchased, she added a few others to the list, and resolved to get them off on the morrow, glad that it was in her power to send out a little delight.

She half envied the women in homes who were busy and happy, and who were anchored to a definite faith and duty. Amusement did not look half as interesting as it had a few days ago. Its gayety was evanescent.

"I must be a good deal older than my years," she sighed.

CHAPTER XII.

AND THEN CONSIDERATION.

SHERBURNE BEAUMANOIR went home as his father desired, and he was not much discomfited by his first rejection, since every one was delighted to see him, and the young girls about showed their pleasure and adoration so plainly. There was nothing overt or forward in this, they were to have him only for a short time, and they were not going to waste a day of it. No one exactly expected to win him, yet such a thing might be possible. And they wanted the pleasure and enjoyment to talk over afterward with girlish interest.

So every day his spirits rose and Gertrude seemed less of an impossibility. When the matter was really settled he would plunge into his studies with new ardor. Yet at times there came a curious misgiving to him. Certain theories in regard to medicine that he had read of and listened to abroad, and Uncle Carew's position at home had fired his enthusiasm. But between the first years of hard study, oftentimes quite disagreeable, and that fine position there would be many years of hard work. He could imagine himself lecturing like Uncle Carew, traveling about and addressing conventions, but to plod along day and night as Bertram and Professor Kenneth were doing from an enthusiasm he did not understand, seemed irksome. Even his cousin, Ned Beaumanoir, cared little for pleasure and less for admiration. But he should want the world to look at what he did. He could

not be content to hide his light under a bushel and wait until the discrimination of the world overturned the bushel.

And he measured these sweet, eager, simple-hearted girls who knew so little out of their narrow round, with the woman of the world, much to their detriment, and it seemed to set her on a higher pedestal. She had a certain style if she was not really beautiful like his Cousin Pearl. Then her dark eyes and her great masses of light hair gave her a distinguished look. She was so ready to talk, she said so many bright things, and sometimes a bit of real wit flashed out. She had a knack of bringing out other people when she made an effort, and harmonizing incongruous elements. Mrs. Townsend had found her of great service in this respect. Gertrude had taken it up as one of her duties, and oftentimes it amused her, quite as if she was trying experiments with different natures.

Sherburne thought he should want a wife that the world could admire, like Aunt Millicent. Mamma and Aunt Lyndell were rather too devoted to family matters and the children, and at present the young man's mind had not turned to domesticity. So he found in Gertrude many of the things he believed suited to his needs.

Meanwhile Mrs. Townsend and her secretary made their visits, and there followed a call to Boston. Sherburne found the city rather dull, for he had not made many real society friends. Uncle Bert had protested against this.

"You cannot be up late at night and have your brains in a whirl of excitement and study at the same time. In a certain manner I am answerable to your father for your progress."

Uncle Con had been a little wary as well. There were many temptations in the city for an attractive young man, who as yet had not learned the real value of money and was not earning it himself, therefore had no right to fritter it away. They went to lunch together occasionally, and now Sherburne dropped into Uncle Con's rooms,—he had not yet set up his housekeeping scheme. He thought once or twice it would be a grand thing to have Mrs. Townsend come and matronize a party of girls, he was so fond of giving pleasure. But the girls he wanted most seemed to be engrossed with their own home duties and pleasures, even Princess, who had written that she should give most of this year to her mother. Was Princess still a little hurt that he had a tender regard for another? Somehow her letters had been rather serious of late. He was glad she was having some gayety in Washington.

As for himself he *had* hesitated a little at taking the young life he wanted in his own keeping altogether. Princess might come and find a lover and happiness and go her way. Gertrude could not go her way if she found dissatisfactions. He had a man's belief that he could make her love him, but he knew alas! that love and happiness were not always synonymous in the long run. He had seen too much of life and waited too long to throw away his chance on uncertainty.

Gertrude *was* attractive. She could win the regard of a younger man. She had many charming society ways. And though when they first met she betrayed a quick rush of delight that thrilled him, the very next time she was quite distant and really indifferent. He was waiting for some sign, some little betrayal of self that girls nearly always made. Mrs. Townsend's half advice, half com-

ment had weighed with him even more than he thought.

"She is very young compared to yourself," the lady had said, "I think she ought to have some chance to know her own mind. On the other hand," laughingly, "I suppose you are aware, Con Murray, that many a girl would be proud to capture such an obdurate campaigner as yourself. But you are not quite old enough to be satisfied with that sort of admiration."

So he had watched her narrowly. Sometimes she felt it and really flirted with whoever happened to be nearest, made herself charming and interesting to some one of note. There might have been lovers in one or two instances, and then all his regard rose in a flame, but she turned cold as if she understood. She evidently was not on the lookout for a chance to marry. He knew girls and women pretty well.

And as he and Sherburne sat over a dainty little supper they talked round to Mrs. Townsend.

"Do you know when they are coming home?" the young fellow asked eagerly. "Or are they going all round the world now that they have started?"

The last was uttered in a resentful manner as if he had some interest at stake.

"I had a note from them this morning. I had asked Mrs. Townsend for the report of a meeting. But no mention was made of their return."

"I suppose Miss Maurice always writes the letters?" was the next comment.

"O no, not always. But reports and articles of various kinds."

"I think *she* ought to have some credit. Uncle Con, don't you consider her a rather unusual girl?"

"There's a good deal of work done in this world in which the party of the first part doesn't get the credit. I have been there myself," said Uncle Con, drily.

"I wonder—she could do something better than that. Seems to me, Uncle Con, you might find a place for her. She is ever so much brighter than the average girl."

"I think her place a very good one. It may not afford scope for all her talents, but she has the protection of a woman of the world, who is an excellent friend to any young girl. And she sees a good deal of society. Her duties are not very onerous."

Sherburne mused a little. Yes, she would be safer there the next three or four years, and after all one didn't want the woman he intended to marry to be running round the world. But he wondered if Mrs. Townsend really appreciated her !

"The Kenneths like her so much. Bertram is quite gone on her." He laughed a little but his face had a momentary flush like a rose.

"Are you there—often?"

"Quite often. Uncle Bert is rather queer about some things, going out I mean, but he is always sure I am in good company there, and at Mrs. Townsend's."

"You hear a good deal of theoretical nonsense talked at Mrs. Townsend's. Experienced people can pick out the grains of wheat from among the chaff."

"O, I don't care much for the nonsense. I like talking to Miss Maurice better," said the young fellow, naïvely.

Uncle Con watched him as he deftly peeled an orange. He suddenly recalled many little events that seemed to betray the boy's fancy—was he anything more than a boy at twenty? He had the making of a splendid man,

he was fine and attractive now in the body, intelligent and capable of making his mark in the world. It would not do to have all this thrown away on a love affair and set himself back years.

But Gertrude—how would she look at it?

It was undeniable that there was a charm in kindred youth. They had seen a good deal of each other. He kept revolving the subject in his mind as he tried to draw out the younger's real sentiments with his air of gay indifference, but Sherburne was wary and kept to general terms. Still youth is indiscreet in its very honesty and courage, and Uncle Con was aware of something that had missed his discerning eyes.

What if Gertrude really cared for him? He had an idea that point was still an uncertain quantity. Sherburne would have been more elated. Still it was evident he cared for her to the verge of love. But then it was a boy's love.

He was away for two or three days, when Mrs. Townsend returned. He came in town at noon, and went around there in the evening, leaving piles of work and letters on his desk. And to-night Gertrude was at the coffee-table, and it seemed to her people had a sudden and insane fancy for tea. Sherburne Beaumanoir sat beside her, and Mrs. Langham was discoursing on Wagner to the young people. It was a rather musical evening.

Gertrude was surprised to see Sherburne walk in jauntily and self-possessed.

"I've ever so many messages for you," he began, in a soft, clear tone, that disarmed her. "How long you stayed away? Bertram is quite heart-broken, and Mrs. Kenneth wondering. Princess sent oceans of love."

"Thank you," she returned, gravely. He had the aplomb of a society man.

When two people had gone away, he bent over to her, and said in a low tone :

"I have accepted your proffer. Let it be friendship between us."

Then Mrs. Langham had come. Sherburne sat smiling and supremely happy. Friendship would be the golden key of entrance again, and he was wise enough to accept it for the present. And then Mr. Murray marched in.

"You are just the person we wanted to settle a difficulty," said Mrs. Townsend. "Come over here at once. It is whether Nordau has been just to Wagner. Of course we are all fascinated with the operas, and people in love with one quality may not be good judges of all. Love does make one narrow-minded."

"O, I must go and hear what Mr. Murray has to say," and Mrs. Langham left them.

"We ought to go too," said Gertrude, half rising.

"O, we can hear all we want to over here. And *I* have so much to say. Was your journey pleasant? You can't think how I wanted to see you again."

Gertrude glanced toward the group of talkers. Mr. Murray's eyes were fixed upon her, and with a curious severity that roused a rebellious spirit within her. Part of it was for the argument some one had advanced, but she did not know that, and resented it with a little motion like a toss of the head, and smiled.

"Yes. You needn't look so incredulous. It *is* the people that make a place for me. It has been a dreary week. I couldn't half study. But now I am going at it in good earnest."

"Is that a perfectly new remark? We are supposed and expected to bring out our best original thought here on Saturday night, and it seems as if I had heard it before."

He laughed. "We cannot reiterate useful and pertinent thoughts too often."

"You must put it into practice."

"I am going to do that. You will see. I shall work for your commendation."

"You must burn midnight oil," she said, sententially.

The eyes were still upon her. She felt them now and flushed, and the listener not knowing the cause, hugged it to his heart as an omen.

"We are worse than the foolish virgins, we have neither lamps nor oil," he commented with a soft, delighted laugh. "Sometimes I get sleepy over the prosy old tomes and then I think of my inspiration."

She made no answer to that.

"Do you like medicine?"

"What a question to ask a grown person. Childhood has to be martyred on the shrine."

"O, I meant the profession—you knew that."

"I shouldn't want to study it myself. I can't understand a woman's desire to be a physician."

"A woman ought never be anything but the centre of a home. Men are put into the world for the hard work."

"I have seen some women work pretty hard in the home centre. And there are more women than men, so every one cannot marry. However, women can keep house together."

"But you will admit they are happier married."

Why must they keep skirmishing around the edge of sentiment? She rejoined, sharply —

“There is a good deal of infelicity.”

“Then it is not the truest or best love,” said the wise young philosopher. “Don’t you suppose I should use every effort to make you happy if I were fortunate enough to win you?”

His tone was pleading, his eyes shone with a softened light.

“If you cannot keep to friendship our pact is broken,” she answered, decisively.

“I mean to. But I cannot help thinking of what might make me supremely happy, even if I have to put it in the far future. There they have settled Wagner and are coming for coffee. O Uncle Con!”

He rose as he spoke, but the satisfied glow still lighted up his face and shone in his fine eyes. He was an attractive fellow, with all the charms of youth.

Gertrude was smiling and amiable, but inwardly resented the questioning look in the elder’s eyes.

Others followed. Some one began to play, the guests hovered about the tea and coffee-tables. In the pauses Gertrude exerted herself to be bright and chatty. Sherburne lingered within her radius, but there was no further chance for asides. He did not much mind, for he was quite convinced that his evening had been a success in reëstablishing a bridge over which friendship might one day cross to love, meanwhile keeping to a discreet boundary.

“Come,” Uncle Con said, as the guests were beginning to depart.

The good-nights were graciously formal. Gertrude felt strangely angry at herself.

Mr. Murray and his nephew walked to the corner where Sherburne halted.

"I will go on with you," the senior said. "Sherburne," after a pause, "are you falling in love with Miss Maurice?"

"I am not falling," with a sort of happy emphasis; "only as a man goes on and on——"

"It is foolish business, and you are too young. And she?"

Sherburne did not answer. He was a little indignant.

"You know it must be years before you can marry. To keep a girl waiting so long is a hard thing, harder even on her. And has Miss Maurice consented? You looked like lovers to-night."

"Did we?" Sherburne was mollified by that and the smile sounded in his voice. "I love her very much, Uncle Con. I really fell in love with her that day at Aunt Millicent's luncheon. She was the most attractive girl there. And that evening at the hotel settled it. I know I shall have to wait——"

"And has she really accepted you?" Uncle Con's voice verged to irritability, but the enthusiastic lover did not remark it.

"She will wait——" had she really promised to wait? "We are to be friends, and she is younger than I am."

"Then it is not a settled engagement?"

"Well—it is an understanding." He could venture upon that. She had said she could not marry him, but then girls often said what they did not mean, and repented and yielded. When she saw how in earnest he was in everything— "Yes," he added, "an understanding; and we can wait."

Was there any use of arguing? There had been head-

strong impulses in his own life and in the boy's father. And just now Sherburne was not likely to listen to advice.

"Well," he exclaimed, after a silence, "don't set your heart too strongly on it. It is unwise and I am sorry for your sake that it has happened. Good-night;" and he turned off to hail a car.

"Poor old fellow!" thought the enthusiastic young lover. Gertrude had been surprised, but not cold or formal, and his sanguine temperament took much for granted.

Mr. Murray was a good deal perplexed. He could see that they would be greatly annoyed at home, and he was afraid the two interests would conflict, study getting the worst of it for awhile. It certainly was foolish on Miss Maurice's part. Dear little Princess, what would she say to such a denouement?

And himself? He had studied Gertrude more than she was aware, more deeply than he had been aware of himself. He was quite used to analyzing motives and feelings and formed pretty correct judgments after his years of experience. If he had followed out his impulse, he would have insisted more than a year ago that Gertrude should marry him, and set himself about making her happy with the same earnestness and persistency that had won for him some of the other prizes of life. But it seemed unmanly. He did not want to wrest any woman's love roughly away from her, he wanted it to be a free gift. Mrs. Townsend's need had come in opportunely. Gertrude should see a little of the world.

But he felt with the sort of prescience that lends love a keen, mysterious insight that he could make her happy, and that while she would not be one of the silly, adoring women, or one of the exigent ones, she could throw just

the charm he wanted around his home. He was almost ashamed of his desire for something young and bright, and yet at heart he would never grow old. And she would be a mate for any time of life.

Would it be worth while to try? Sherburne would not come to the full richness of manhood in years. If all things went right with him he would make a fine, strong, admirable man. Then in this prime the sparkle would have evaporated from the cup of love and there would be only the sober draught. He would love again. He would doubtless have more than one fancy before he settled to that highest regard.

If Gertrude loved him, and if she was willing to wait, that would settle it. But he wanted something more than a peradventure to satisfy him. And he was man enough for Gertrude's sake to smooth some of the thorns out of their path. His love was not altogether selfish if he was so much nearer the end of things. This would be the end for him. All the rest of his years he would be the jolly bachelor uncle.

Yet he had a dozen minds before he sauntered up the street rather late on Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Townsend he knew was to spend some hours and dine with a dear friend. If he should find Sherburne there that would answer his question.

Gertrude had said she would rather stay at home and read, in reply to Mrs. Townsend's friendly suggestion that she should go to the Kenneths. Then she informed the maid that she would not be at home to Mr. Beaumanoir if he should call. He would hardly be likely to venture on Sunday, but his daring of last night had surprised her. She felt very much dissatisfied with herself. Some positive step must be taken to end the matter.

In the midst of her cogitations she was surprised by a caller she had not thought of.

"Mrs. Townsend has gone out," she began, rather confusedly. Should she ask him in?

"I did not want to see her, but you." He put down his hat with an air of resolution, and seated himself in his easy, at-home manner, for he was always at home here.

For once Miss Maurice's readiness quite forsook her. She made some faint comments on the day, which was very lowering now, with indications of snow, then she explained Mrs. Townsend's visit, and asked his opinion of a new novel.

The opinion was given somewhat at length. There were several strictures in it with which she did not agree, and this turned on the question of a long engagement begun in early youth.

Was she justifying her own step?

They always found so many subjects of conversation, even if they disagreed on half of them. A very ridiculous idea had come into her mind. She had entertained a vague fancy through the day that she might ask Mrs. Carew to use her influence in some quiet manner, to suggest or persuade Sherburne that he had no time for such romantic folly as falling in love. Then the family could not think she was leading him on. She had a half-fear that she could not quite manage him.

And now she wondered what a man's influence would be; a kindly, wise, experienced man, who certainly would have his nephew's welfare at heart. She remembered the night she had laid her petty troubles before him, and it had brought forth the half proposal of marriage that she had quenched immediately, because it looked almost as if she had been begging for it.

She raised her eyes. He was studying her intently. Her face was scarlet. She could have cried with vexation. Then she recalled the look of last night.

He rose, though he was sitting not far from her, and, with a step or two, took her hand that was so spiritless she felt ashamed of it.

"Gertrude—" his tone was almost fatherly, "will you answer me a question truly? Are you engaged or even partially engaged, to Sherburne Beaumanoir?"

She wanted to spring up and snatch away her hand, and answer him indignantly, to triumph over his mean suspicion. But she did not do it soon enough. She could not trust her voice. She was glad he had asked. O what made her so contradictory, so uncertain to herself?

"Gertrude—" he so often said Miss Maurice. Something in the tone touched her, thrilled her.

"O no, no," she said, with a protest that filled him with joy. "O, will you help me to—to ——"

"I shall be at your service for any assistance in my power—even if my surmise had been true."

"How good you are." She knew then he did not care about her in *that* manner, so she could talk freely. Had Sherburne made a confidant of him?

"I am afraid you will think—that I have led him on. Perhaps I have been to blame. But I did not imagine until he spoke—he seems so young, and I tried not to see him alone when I suspected what might be possible. O, do you suppose it is, or may be a lasting regard?"

Her voice was tremulous with fear and emotion.

Had he any right to come between these young souls? He knew youthful passions were evanescent, oftentimes

unwise, but here and there one redeemed the unwisdom by the faithfulness of the regard.

"If you love him— That will settle the present question for you ——"

"But I do not, you see," she answered, quickly. "I am not very impressionable, I think, or romantic. I can see all the trouble it would make for Sherburne, even if I could comfort him with an enthusiastic love. But I am afraid I should say—'I told you this would be so'"—and she gave a little agitated laugh that was far from any sense of amusement, while her eyes were humid.

He wanted to take her in his arms and comfort her, let her cry a little in girlish fashion, but he refrained with a strong effort, because he knew in the end he should win.

"You see," she began, hurriedly, when she had found her voice, "if I had a fortune of my own, or some high-up connections that would be of an advantage to him, and *did* love him even a little, it would not be so bad. But there are really *no* extenuating circumstances," with a humorous sound that betokened self-possession. "I do not want to, and could not do it. Only I should be sorry to make ever such a little break in his life. He ought to go on with his career and let girls and love alone for the next half-dozen years. I should be bored thinking continually what was best for another person, comforting him in discouragements, spurring him up when he flagged a little. I am very selfish, am I not?"

"I do not call that selfishness. There are cases where one seems called upon to devote one's life and aims for another, but this does not appear so urgent. And you are quite ready to be forgotten, to see him transfer his affections to some one else," half jealously.

"It would not trouble me at all. Yet I should consider it quite as foolish in him."

"And you remember he is a handsome fellow. At five and twenty he will be a fascinating man."

"And at five and twenty I shall feel half a century old and as if I were his grandmother."

Both laughed then, and they went over to the sofa and sat down side by side. She had not felt so thoroughly friendly since they were at Melchias. It was very pleasant to have her so near, and if she felt old within, there was enough left to rejuvenate her. He would not have minded if she had looked every day of five and twenty, but he had to confess she did not, and he also confessed in his secret soul that he loved youth with all its inconsistencies.

The maid tapped at the door.

"Shall I make the tea?" she asked.

"You will have a cup of tea?" and Gertrude turned inquiringly to Mr. Murray. "I have done the honors before," laughing and coloring a little.

"I shall be much pleased to take tea with you," he made answer.

"There is one guest," she whispered to Mary. "Set out the tea-table for two."

CHAPTER XIII.

A LOVER ON THE WINNING SIDE.

IT was very pretty and cozy down here by the window and the corner. The table would have answered for three. She and Mrs. Townsend often used it for breakfast. They could dispense with the maid, and discuss any subject without hesitation. Gertrude dismissed her now.

She made a charming hostess, though the color kept coming and going, and he thought he had never seen her look so really pretty. Her manners had all the dainty society touches that she took to so naturally. They talked on indifferent subjects, she relating some bright incidents of last winter, and describing people they had met with graphic touches and much discrimination.

She would be a very pleasant companion for the rest of his life, and he could give her much delight and comfort. As he had said to Princess he could be quite a foolish lover when he let himself go, and he was not so old but that he wanted a great deal of love, and felt capable of giving a great deal in return. He had plenty of time for the indulgence now. And all his life it had seemed as if when he had taken a fancy that indicated future ripening, he was sent off to the ends of the earth, or it was at the fag end of some journey and he was coming home. Once he had carried a memory in his heart for months, to find the girl lost to him through a very satisfactory engagement, and full of love's enthusiasm.

He had never been very deeply touched, and no one had died for love of him, so his conscience was clear. He had grown more sympathetic and generous toward human nature, one of the qualities gained by a wide knowledge of life. He had never counted much on perfection, children in large families soon mend of such beliefs and cease to make the demand. His father had stood to him for the embodiment of noble manhood, and with all the cultured people he had met he had never seen any cause to change his mind.

He studied Gertrude with more than a lover's eye. He had come to the time when comfort is the great thing. Not that having enjoyed all the pleasures himself he was tired of them and would want to shut a woman out of the experience. He still loved variety, and people with all their fads and follies amused him, and young people with their heroic beliefs interested him.

They sat a long while over the table. She had grown to be an attractive talker in that she mostly left herself out of the question. Now and then he managed to bring out some quality or a bit of temper, or a flash of wit. And he was considering whether he should surprise her to-night or let her go on and have a young girl's dream of friendship.

There was a little feeling about Sherburne, poor fellow.

"We have not settled the most important matter yet," he said, as they went back to the reception-room. "It will be hardly fair to allow Sherburne to go on under a mistaken notion. But your answer would be definite this time."

"I hate to think about it."

She had been so deliciously comfortable the last hour

that it was like being dragged back over a stubble field, and the lines of her face betrayed it.

"But you must consider it, my child, and you must act."

That had a lovely, fatherly sound, and this man was so much wiser than her own father, who would have beat about and offered some impossible solution.

"I can't act alone," she said, rather pettishly.

"Give him the chance, then. By the indications of last evening he will be ready enough to take it. It is *not* wise to let it go on unless you do mean to marry him in the distant future."

"But I do not."

"There is no temptation?"

"I am not old enough to be tempted by such a prospect. I like my present life better."

"I must say it seems to suit you admirably."

"And it offers some permanency."

"That would make waiting easier. I want you to understand that you are giving up what most girls would consider a fair prospect."

"You forget that I am not in love," she returned, sharply, with a slight frown of annoyance.

"I do sincerely believe you are not," he said, with a tender gravity that touched her; for he was fully convinced.

"Then the sooner the crisis comes the better for both parties."

She sat silent. Her eyes were softened with a mysterious pity. He was sorely tempted to turn it into joy. But he rose without yielding to it. His love should stand out by itself and not be mixed up with any other matter.

"I have made you an unconscionable visit," he said, taking up his hat.

"And given me a pleasant evening with all the good advice." There was a mischievous glint in her eyes and a half smile lurking about her tempting lips. "I shall follow the advice," with a touch of seriousness quite charming.

"And you may depend upon me for the rear guard."

Then they said a cordial good-night. She settled among the cushions and gave way to a delicious reverie. She was so sure of her friend now. She would rather have his respect and friendship than to have snapped him up in that half proposal, and have a few unwelcome questioning glances as if she had maneuvered for him. Marriage was not quite everything as her mother thought. Then she gave a soft little laugh at the awful disappointment her mother would experience if she knew of this second slighted opportunity.

Mrs. Townsend returned soon after.

"I've had just a delightful, restful time," she said with a gratified sound in her voice. "There was no one else, of course. And we talked over old days when you could really enjoy, and the whole study of life was not to be amused by some strange new thing."

"Mr. Murray came in," said Gertrude. "And he took tea with me. Tea is a quaintly enjoyable institution."

"Yes. Then you were not lonesome."

"I do not believe I should have been lonesome any way," returned Gertrude, who felt at that moment she could go on to old age without another lonesome hour.

But it was a rather trying week with many nervous moments in it. Mr. Murray did not drop in, she guessed

he was staying away purposely. She did not go to walk at any hour when there was the slightest chance of meeting Sherburne. On Friday evening she summoned courage to go around to Mrs. Kenneth's. The professor and Bertram had gone to the Draytons' to meet some famous people.

She lingered after the clock struck nine and finally rose. There was a quick step in the study room and the next instant a delighted exclamation.

"I have fortunately come in time," Sherburne exclaimed. "I just wanted a book I had left here. Good-evening, Mrs. Kenneth. Good-evening, Ruth. You won't get the professor home before midnight. Uncle Bert has just gone down there. How people can be so much interested in what happened thousands of years ago! I like things of to-day. And now I'll take you home on my way back," to Gertrude.

"Do not hurry away on my account."

"O no. I'm keeping good hours. I have turned over a bright new leaf and Uncle Bert has written a commendation on it."

He was so brilliant and smiling that he seemed to make an atmosphere in the room.

"That is an excellent account to hear about you," rejoined Mrs. Kenneth.

They walked down the stairs and out in the street. Gertrude's heart sank within her.

"Don't go straight home. I have so much to say. Didn't I tell you I could work when there was a purpose in view? I've gone on finely. And I've kept myself well in hand, though I have wanted to go out and way-lay you somewhere. But I thought I would save all my joy until to-morrow night."

"You will not see me," she said, gravely; "I am going to the theatre."

"With whom?" in a peremptory tone.

"That cannot and must not make any difference to you," she answered, decisively. "I am glad we met to-night. You seem to have forgotten the talk we had before you went home. I was in earnest then."

"But you said we might be friends. I am only going to ask for friendship until I really have some prospects of my very own to offer you. I have only been studying half-heartedly and wasn't quite sure my bent was for medicine after all. There are some things about it I don't like and shall not like until I get to be a high-up man expounding theories. And if you make yourself do it for the sake of the woman you love ——"

"Stop," Gertrude interrupted. "You take up a life profession because it is the desire of your inmost soul and not for any woman's sake. A man must have courage and strength enough of his own to stand quite alone. Suppose I said I did not want you to study medicine."

"Well, there is law. Father would be awfully glad to have me reconsider. And there is a splendid connection."

"You must put me out of the question, out of your life. I told you the truth when I said I did not love you. You have taken up your hope on a flimsy basis. I am sorry, but I have not changed my mind in the slightest."

"But you were willing to wait," rather resentfully.

"I may not be married in years, perhaps not at all. It will not be because I am waiting for any special person, and I shall not promise you anything. You have to fit yourself for a place in life, you owe some duty to your

parents ; and when you have achieved this it will be time to think of the woman you would like to share it with. You will contrast her with me then and be surprised that you ever fancied me."

"You are mistaken. I shall never care for any one in this way again," he flung out, angrily.

"I sincerely hope not. A man ought not to care for a woman who insists that she does not love him. Why should you want to win a woman against her will ?"

"Well, there would be the triumph. Such things have been done," he returned in an imperious tone.

"I do not think I could be won in that way."

"O my darling, forgive me ! No, not against your will. Love must always be a free gift. But you will not try. That vexes me."

"I am quite sure I could not persuade myself to love. Then there would be the years of feverish expectation that would interfere to distract your attention from what was really worthy, from your highest aims. And in two years' time I might meet my ideal. Then, would you want to marry a woman whose truest love was another's ?"

"But you couldn't if you had promised," he said, confidently.

"Will you understand that I shall make no promises ?" His persistence began to rouse her temper.

"But if you wait ——"

"I shall be quite free. I may marry in a month's time," with a kind of fling in her voice.

"Then you *have* a lover," jealously.

"I have no lover. But some one may fancy me," with a touch of exaltation in her tone. "There was a man in Denver, an ex-congressman and a mine owner, that did fancy me."

"But you did not love him," triumphantly.

"And I do not love you."

Sherburne's hopes fell again. As he was willing to wait and work, why could she not accept the offering since she had admitted she might wait.

"It would be this way," he said. "You should be free. If you met some one to your fancy, why I suppose I should accept the fact after awhile. I shouldn't murder either of you," with a short laugh. "It would go very hard with me, but it wouldn't be quite like being thrown over in the very beginning, and having my life upset."

"I should think it would be much easier."

"Ah, but I love you. And it is a fair field while you haven't any lover."

She wondered a little if she might not drop into a desperate flirtation if that would cure him.

They had passed the house and gone around the block. Now she halted at the stoop.

"You must give me up entirely or not see me at all," she exclaimed, decisively.

"I shall do neither."

She touched the bell and disappeared within, not even saying good-night.

She had forgiven him before, she would again. He was determined to succeed.

"What can you do with a very persistent lover who will take no refusal? I have not had much experience in lovers. My first one gave me up cheerfully, because there was some one he liked better and I was deprived of the honor of declining him. But if declining is such difficult work, I pray all the rest may give me up, even if I suffer from mortification."

Gertrude threw her hat on the sofa and herself on the hassock at Mrs. Townsend's feet.

"Is it Sherburne Beaumanoir?"

"Yes," in a tone of vexation.

"I surmised that it would come to this. It is a boyish fancy, and a 'boy's will is the wind's will.' The wind may blow furiously for a time, but it does stop. The river goes steadily on."

"And I'd rather take my sail along the river than to be blown about by the wind. I shouldn't want to be talking and persuading and encouraging and considering. I want a future ready-made, if I have any. I am afraid I have been spoiled by things coming to me so easily. Can I do anything more than say 'no'?"

"And act the 'No' out whenever you have a chance. I am very sorry. It is the wildest folly for such a young fellow to fall into an engagement, and later on he is apt to thank the girl whose good sense kept him out of it."

She went to the theatre with a party of young people, and when she returned the guests had departed. Sherburne had not come in. Mr. Murray had been, of course.

"There is an invitation for you. A famous Russian violinist with a tongue-twisting name, and a singer of note. I think you can be trusted with such an old fellow without a chaperone. I have an engagement and a supper afterward, so if I am not home until late, you may lay it to dissipation and not suspect me of running off with some fine fellow."

She looked at the tickets and Mr. Murray's card on which the invitation was written in pencil. Tuesday evening. How long it seemed since last Sunday, as if she had not seen him for a month. And he was in the habit

of dropping in often, any time of day or evening. What would he say, she wondered. Perhaps he had seen Sherburne. But it was hardly likely this subject would be discussed between them.

Miss Ensign came in Tuesday afternoon.

"We were wondering if you were ill or anything," she exclaimed. "Mrs. Kenneth misses you so when you do not run in nearly every day. You see and hear so many things ——"

"And talk so much," appended Gertrude.

"We like the talk," smilingly. "O, I have had such a delightful letter from Princess. She is having a lovely time in Washington and it seems that she almost made herself famous singing at a musicale. I do wish she could come up here. But they are all there together. What happy times they do have."

Ruth sighed a little. She liked Gertrude very much, but she had not come as near to her as to the other girls.

Gertrude was in readiness with her gloves in her hand when Mr. Murray came. Mrs. Townsend had only time for a word or two.

"We shall be tolerably early," he said, "but we will not mind that. I rarely go until a thing is half through."

"But why? Does it bore you?"

"O no, I am generally at the other place. Cities may not divide the honor of my being born in them, but entertainments often divide my criticisms, and presence."

"And you take a whole evening for this. Is it so extraordinary?"

"I take the evening for you."

Gertrude flushed.

People were slowly gathering. Their seats were at the end where they would not be disturbed by new-

comers. Mr. Murray studied his program for a few moments, paying special attention to the names of the performers.

"Have you seen Sherburne?" he asked, presently, in a very low tone.

"Last Friday evening."

"And you told him ——"

"I tried to make him understand. I should like to know how well I succeeded."

"He was not in Saturday evening."

"I told him I should not be there."

"Did you think he would come?"

"I had not supposed he would the week before."

"Then one cannot count on him as a certain factor in any case?"

There was a smile of amusement as Murray uttered this.

"I should like not to count on him in any case. But it seems hard to make him understand."

Then they dropped the young man. The violinist was exceptionally fine and had to play an encore. The young singer had a sweet, well-trained voice. There were other things, a brilliant piano duet and a fantasy.

Between times they had little asides. The color kept fluttering up and down Gertrude's face. She had not minded his glances very much before, she had become accustomed to being almost stared at, but this sent strange little shivers over her which were neither heat nor cold but a vague sort of deliciousness. And he was saying odd suggestive things that did not mean anything of course, but occasionally she wished he would not. Others might use this sort of society flattery, but he had no need. She hoped they had come to something better, to friendship.

It was not a tiresomely long concert. He made a few notes and some approving nods, and then wrapped her fur cape about her and put up the collar, elbowing a way through the crowd for her. What a manly, fine-looking person he was. She recalled the fact that these solicitous attentions were natural to him when he was on his best behavior and not afflicted with laziness. He was not putting on anything special to-night, she told herself.

But it was a new thing to be almost carried up the stairs, and then have him fumble with the key and come to his assistance, and feel her hand crumpled up in his as she opened the door.

He turned up the gas just a little. How warm it felt after the keenness outside, and the suggestive softness through the ground globe made shadows in the corners and gave a weird look to the pile of cushions as if some one might be hiding there.

"Take off your wraps," he said. "I am going to stay until Mrs. Townsend comes home. She has never entrusted you to my care before, and I want to return you in good order. Were you paid for going?"

"Why, yes—since I had none of the expense," she answered, laughingly.

"And the little tickets were complimentary."

"There were car fares," sententiously.

"Yes. Gertrude, you will make an admirable wife for a poor man. You must insist upon having a household account book. A penny saved is as good as a penny earned, I have heard, so be careful of the pennies."

"When I find the poor man."

"Is your heart so set upon poverty? That is youthful

and romantic, but rather unwise at the end of the century, when money seems such a factor."

He had dropped on the sofa. She stood beside him, wondering a little at his mood. He caught her hand and drew her down.

"Gertie," he said, "considerably more than a year ago there was some incipient love-making. He was a rather oldish fellow, and she was a young girl who had seen nothing of the world, and who, if she had been just a tint more scheming would have heard him through, and maybe accepted him. But she refused him as any good honorable girl would have who wasn't quite certain what either of them meant. It was one of those wise blunders that sometimes occur when people are not sure of themselves or each other. And now the old fellow is a year older, and the girl has had some experience and a young lover, and she knows there is more than one man in the world. Do you think she can love well enough to bridge over all the years between and be happy with him?"

Gertrude Maurice sat upright, stiff and surprised, and simply looked at Mr. Murray.

"Will I do—Gertie?" he said, softly, and his arm was about her, drawing her down to his shoulder.

"O, you don't mean—" there was a little convulsive catch in her voice.

"I mean that I love you and want you. I mean a great many more things that you will go on finding out year by year, if you conclude to take me. Some you will like, some won't suit you at all, but you see I am an oldish fellow and can't fly around like a weather cock at every young girl's whim. But taking it all in all, if you think you *can* love me we may get along fairly. I shall

want a great deal of love—quite as much as any young fellow.”

“O!” with a soft cry. Then she hid her face. Did he really want her? If she had asked her gift out of all the world, it would have been this. A week ago she had settled to a delightful friendship, and thought the world had nothing more to give her.

“Gertrude?”

“O, I think now you must know, that you must have known it all along. One day—on the sand sat Melchias Island. It was just a look. I could not think you would come to care for me. I envied the girl for whom you would care. And that night on the boat—I was not sure how much you meant, and I didn’t want any one to say I had taken a mean advantage of your lovely hospitality. I would rather have given you up.”

“And now you don’t mind what any one thinks?”

There was a strand of mirthfulness in his tone.

“I am afraid I don’t.”

He drew the flushed face up to his and gave her her first lover’s kisses.

“Gertrude,” he began, seriously, some moments later, “I want you to consider this subject of age. When I am sixty you will be at the finest period of a woman’s life. And it is only fair to warn you there is very little chance of widowhood. My father is hale and hearty, and I feel within me the certain premonitions of old age. I shall want to be loved and coddled and cared for—I dare say I shall be jealous and unreasonable. I won’t begin by painting those years in rose color, even if we have violets in their sweetness all along first. And this is a grave question.”

“But you are not old!” she protested. “And did it

ever occur to you that I am not young for twenty years ? Or else I have lived in some other life and have vague experiences of it ? ”

“ I want you young. That’s a bit of my unreasonableness. And I want you sweet and fond and bright to take me back to that magical land. I want love enough to make up for all these years. And I will promise to be better than the Browning lover, I will love you the whole year round, not merely ‘ half the year. ’ ”

She laughed delightedly.

“ Do you think Princess will like it ? ” she asked, presently. “ She loves you so. ”

“ She has given me permission. ”

“ I wonder if I had never come into your life after that night on the boat— ” she said, hesitatingly.

“ Ah, but you were not going out. I will tell you now—Mrs. Townsend wrote to me while we were at the island. I thought the place would suit you better than the teaching you abhorred. I did not think of myself just then, that came a little later. I saw her that day in New York. She had written to Mrs. St. John and received her commendation, and made an appointment to meet you. She taxed me with a suspicious fondness, and on condition that I was not to interfere, neither see you nor write to you for a year, she engaged to keep you tolerably safe, unless some enchanting young man came along. ”

“ They were rather middle aged, ” said Gertrude, mirthfully. “ There were two of them, one rich, and famous in his own estimation. ”

“ And I am famous in other people’s estimation. That makes a great difference. ”

“ And you knew all the while ? ”

"I was not going to let you out into the great world with no watchful care. And if the young man had appeared I should have hurried to the fray at once."

"I am glad you cared for me then." It was delightful to have been loved unknowingly.

"So you have this arrears to make up to me."

She nestled closer. The care and interest was very sweet. They both forgot about the young man of confident hopes.

It was just midnight when Mrs. Townsend returned.

"Con Murray," she began, "you must go home at once. You need not even stop for an explanation. This is taking a mean advantage of my absence, and depriving my secretary of her natural rest. You know what I said about them when they began to have lovers."

"I shall see about having my house put in order at once. To-morrow at ten you may expect me. Can I stay to luncheon?"

They all laughed.

When he was gone Mrs. Townsend put her arm about Gertrude.

"You will have a fine husband, dear, but I wish he was ten years younger."

Gertrude thought she would not have him changed in the slightest respect.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DISCORD OF UNREASON.

OVER their cozy breakfast Gertrude confessed her unsatisfactory attempt to convince her young admirer that he had nothing to hope for and that even friendship now would be irksome.

"I really did not think him in earnest, at least not marrying earnest. He will soon recover from his fancy. And the best step will be to announce your engagement at once."

Gertrude turned a vivid scarlet. Was it actually true that she was engaged to the one man she felt she could love with fervent devotion, the man she had sometimes speculated upon, but never in the depth of her heart believed she could win.

"You see the idea is not new to me," continued her friend. "I like Con Murray extremely, but I did not mean he should shut you out of opportunities for judging whether younger men had not some subtle charm for you. I am not sure even *I* would like the disparity. People nearer of an age are more apt to have similar tastes and enjoyments. But his profession will keep him in touch with the younger ideas of life, the work and thoughts of to-day. And there is one particular mistake I hope you will avoid."

A tint of color crept up in Mrs. Townsend's face, and she gave an airy sort of nod and smile as if she was not quite sure how her advice would be received.

"O tell me whatever you think will benefit me and help me to make him happy."

"My dear, let him try to make *you* happy for awhile. Young wives often offer too much devotion. But what I wished to say was that you must get used to seeing other women admire him, and you must not turn unduly jealous. Women have been used to making much of him. They do have favors to ask of him and I think he is particularly friendly to struggling feminines. There are many silly women in the world who have a fancy they can understand this or that particular man and make him happier than his wife does. There are others who make a bid for any man's admiration. And the wife who turns cold and silent and proud surely loses. Keep your right to try for his admiration as well as his love. A little experience will teach you when to claim as well as when to refrain, and do not be too self-willed to make the endeavor. You will find men are not perfection, but then neither are women."

They both strayed away from the subject on which they had started. The mail came in and they were still sitting over the fruit when Mr. Murray entered.

He walked around and kissed Gertrude with an air of proprietorship that quite amazed her, and drawing a chair sat down beside her.

"Do you suppose I could have some coffee? I was up at six this morning, in the dark and dreary world before there was any smiling sun. And it does not smile very cordially now."

"That can make little difference to you in your present beatific state. You are a spoiled child and I ought to take you in training for Gertrude's sake. But you may have the coffee this morning."

"Thank you at least twenty times."

"You are moderate. I am glad to see you are not in an exaggerated frame of mind."

Mrs. Townsend rang for the coffee. Gertrude felt oddly embarrassed, but Mr. Murray soon dropped into a half teasing and wholly delightful mood. Mrs. Townsend insisted with great apparent earnestness that she could not give up her secretary until the year expired.

"But I have another to commend to you. A young woman who despises men and has forsworn matrimony."

"I have no faith in women who despise men. They have generally been crossed in love and are soured, or have an eye on the next chance."

"Then I will come myself and write your letters. I will allow Gertrude to pour tea or coffee on Saturday evenings, whichever is the least arduous."

"Or renders her the least attractive."

"Exactly. How quickly you guessed my meaning."

"I knew you had some Bluebeard propensities."

He nodded and laughed.

"Now I am going to give you just half an hour. You may wander out to the reception-room."

"And no chaperon! How utterly delightful you are! Gertrude, fortunately we will not go to Paris until next year; New York will be satisfactory to us."

They walked out of the cozy drawing-room. Was he really her lover?

Mrs. Townsend looked after them in an amused fashion. She had a half feeling of elation that her protégé had captured this man whom many a society girl had angled for. Yet she had not pinned much faith on his first fancy, and was pleased that Gertrude had not gone headlong into admiration for him.

"I wonder," Gertrude said, after awhile, "if you can understand that I feel truly sorry for Sherburne, and have a vague misgiving that he will take the tidings of the——"

"The engagement," he appended, and she paused and colored in embarrassment.

——"Harder than any of us have thought. Will you tell him?"

"I will do it as soon as possible. He has a good deal of temper and may flare up at first. But he must see—and I think he has some common sense."

Gertrude gave a little sigh. "I wish it had not happened." Could she have averted it? His preference had flattered her. Any young girl it seemed to her might fall enthusiastically in love with him, if she had no other ideal. And she sincerely hoped it was one of the evanescent fancies.

It was a strong one, however. He was the embodiment of young romance, and a first love with such inexperienced natures seems to pervade every fibre of heart and brain. He had a stubborn belief that devotion must win in the end even if it dethroned common sense for a season. Her charming friendliness he felt certain sprang from a deeper interest, and her way of holding aloof had piqued his vanity. A girl who had dropped into a flirtation, and had no quality but sweetness would soon have satiated him, and the fancy died from lack of that fine sustenance that holds a promise of better things to come.

And now he was resolved not to give her up. He had a youthful belief that love must conquer from its very persistency, since he was quite sure she loved no one else.

But the struggle made him impatient and a little irritable. He could not study with the zest of the last fortnight, for he was continually planning how he could meet

her again, and storing up arguments. He might throw up his present aims and find a business opening that would enable him to marry sooner. His brain was a chaos of half-formed plans.

"I confess Sherburne puzzles me, and tries me as well," said Doctor Carew to his wife. "He has so much force and energy, so much quickness and ability, but I am afraid he is more brilliant than stable. Just when he raises your hopes and you feel he has reached a definite purpose, you find he has dropped down to the verge of indifference. I *do* wonder if his heart is sincerely in the profession he has chosen."

"But remember how really young he is," returned Mrs. Carew. "His air and manner and general knowledge of the world make him seem older. There are many qualities so like his father. One can't help having high hopes for him."

"And some of the young fellows who seem to promise most, never do anything especial. Now Ned isn't a brilliant chap, but he has a great deal of persistence and is going to take his next degree with honors. I should like to have him in charge. And if I felt less responsibility for Sherburne, I might take it more lightly."

"I am afraid you were born not to take things lightly," Lyndell said, with a smile. And the thought came into her mind as to how nearly his own sons would satisfy him in years to come? How much real and lasting influence did any individual exert?

The world seemed mostly going at cross purposes with Sherburne Beaumanoir. How could he manage to see Gertrude again? He made excuses to pass the house, he dropped in at the Kenneths'. Bertram wearied him with questions, he was so eager for every bit of knowl-

edge, or else he had to recount some remarkable fact or discovery. He rebuffed Aunt Lyndell's attempts to draw him out of his abstracted mood.

Uncle Con sent him an invitation to come and take supper with him at his rooms. He had a bit of news for him.

"Another piece of luck I dare say," the boy mused. "I wish I could strike luck somewhere. Three or four years is a long while to wait."

But he went, and had a warm welcome. There was a real fire burning in the grate, and though the place was littered up bachelor fashion, it looked cozy and hospitable.

"What have you been doing with yourself the last fortnight?" asked Uncle Con. "I have hardly seen you."

"I have been busy about various matters," was the brief reply. He had not desired to see any one.

"I hope you have not been gay and dissipated."

"I have not been very gay."

"Well, a little seriousness is good now and then."

The waiter came in and began to prepare the table. Uncle Con eyed his guest. What made the usually bright fellow so serious?

"I hope you are in no money trouble, Sherburne," he began, kindly.

"It isn't a present but a future contingency," and he gave a faint smile. "Uncle Con, do you know of anything in which in a few years a fellow could be realizing a fair salary?"

"At business?"

"Yes, I suppose it would have to be business. I am afraid I have not the genius to write a striking novel, or hit upon some invention to supply a long-felt want."

"There needs to be some training. Are you tired of medicine?"

"Perhaps not *tired*. It is so long to wait. And then there are several years spent in acquiring a practice."

"And in business there ought to be several years' training, unless one has the money to secure a favorable partnership."

The supper came in, a sort of high tea. They did not need the waiter and he was dismissed. Uncle Con started another subject, to find his nephew still abstracted to a certain degree.

He suddenly roused. "Uncle Con," he began, "what was your news? Have you been writing a successful play?"

"One could not be certain of the success in the writing. Plays have an uncertain first night. But I thought you might be interested in another outcome, which I hope will not be as uncertain. A change in my life ——"

"O, are you going away again? Uncle Con, I almost envy you. It must be delightful to do just what one wishes."

"I haven't always followed out my own fancies. I have been doing a good deal of what other people wished. We have to, in this life. Things are seldom ready-made for us."

Sherburne seemed considering. "I don't know what you could do to surprise people in general," he exclaimed, "unless you married."

"Then I shall surprise them. That is exactly what I purpose to do."

"And I envy you there," in a rapid, grudging tone. "If I could be five years older and have a competence?"

Was the young fellow really dreaming of that? Mr. Murray was surprised at his earnestness. He had treated the matter lightly in his thoughts. He had seen so many young loves.

"Yes," he replied, to his former affirmation, "I have resolved to marry and have a real home of my own. I shall keep open house for all the nephews and nieces. And now you may guess. It is some one you have seen, some one you know quite well."

Sherburne glanced intently at his uncle. There was a pretty widow he had met at Mrs. Townsend's who had a curious fashion of claiming Uncle Con—there *was* Mrs. Townsend. O no, that could not be. There were two charming western women who had been visiting in the city, and Uncle Con had taken them to the theatres and introduced them in several congenial circles. One, the elder, was an energetic newspaper woman.

"You are such a general admirer of the sex that one would be a little puzzled to select any particular person."

"You think so?" Uncle Con gave a soft delighted sort of laugh. "Yet you need not go very far. It is some one we have known for a year and a half, the girls longer than that."

A sudden sharp breathless pang seized Sherburne. He looked steadily at his uncle, his eyes dilating, his lips losing their youthful gayety and settling into definite lines of obstinacy and doubt. A certain revelation crept in slowly, though he was trying to fight it every inch of the way. *She* had confessed to having an ideal, though she had strenuously denied the real lover. What madness, what bewilderment had seized her!

"You must tell me," he said, huskily, and his eyes

dropped. He seemed bracing for a blow and the brilliant coloring faded.

"It is Miss Maurice. I liked her a good deal the summer at Melchias island. She was young and had seen nothing of the world, so I preferred she should go away with Mrs. Townsend. If she had met some one to her fancy that would have been the end of it. And it would not have been the first untimely fancy of my life, either."

There was a sound in his voice meant for solace to the young fellow, who was impervious to comfort or reason just now. And the tender light in the elder's face maddened him.

"I suppose she thinks you a good catch," he said, in what he meant for sarcasm, but the curl of the lip made it insolence. "You have a fine position and your wife will be well received among attractive people and have a good many indulgences. Then your fortune is already established. She will not have to wait years, as she would if she took some young man who had his to make."

"You do her scant justice, I think. She could marry richer men if she cared for mere money."

"The position counts for something. And it must gratify a woman's vanity to capture a man who is made as much of by women as you are."

Uncle Con laughed. He would have been angry if he had not known the other side of the case, for it seemed intended disrespect.

"Of course it isn't for love," Sherburne flung out angrily. "She might love a young man, but when she deliberately chooses between youth and love, and a man double her age and all the material things of life—it is easy to see what has swayed her."

Mr. Murray was displeased.

"Do you know of her having done this, Sherburne?" he asked, incisively. "If you do not I cannot allow you to traduce the woman who has accepted me. For after all, I am not rich enough to be any overwhelming temptation. And I do think she is truthful enough to have declined my proffer if her affections were elsewhere engaged."

That was the sting of it. He was not indignant at being betrayed, he could not accuse Gertrude Maurice of that; he was angry that she had not loved him, and with the unreasonable faith of youth he was quite sure that in time he might have won her regard but for this interference on his uncle's part.

"She liked me. She did the first day we met. I can't explain—I'm not used to dissecting people's feelings and writing them up. She has been—well, I had grounds to think she would have come to love me presently. And I love her. I shall never love any one so much again. I shall never have faith in a woman's smiles or her sweet tones, if these can deceive. I suppose one cannot blame her for doing the best she could for herself. If you had not come— And Uncle Con, you are twice her age!"

He had that triumph over his rival—splendid youth. And boy-like, he made the most of it in his flashing eyes.

"Not quite," returned Mr. Murray, with an aspect of imperturbable good humor. "And I shall never be so near it again. She will be growing up to me. In ten years more I shall not be double her age."

"But—it is a shame!"

"I should like to be set back ten years for her sake, yet they have been rich, satisfying years to me. But,

Sherburne, suppose you go and present your case to her. Set it forth with all the advantages of youth. If you win I will relinquish her, though I confess I love her as well."

"It would be of no use." Sherburne could not bring himself to admit that twice she had refused his overtures. He was too sore and angry and obstinate to be just to her.

"I suppose a woman is the best judge of whom she is capable of loving," said the elder.

Sherburne pushed away his chair and rose with an indignant gesture. All the rest of life would have a shadow over it, a sorrow through it. She could have been inspiration to him and helped him to attain position, to work for prosperity, for her. What was the use of being rich and great if no one cared! Just now there was no one in his world but Gertrude Maurice. What would the other achievements be to a lonely man.

"Sherburne," said his uncle, with grave sympathy, "let us discuss the matter with a little reason. You really ought not to burthen your young manhood with an engagement. In a few years from this your ideal will change. Honestly I think you can find a more fitting mate when your time of real love comes. You will learn that youth has more than one fancy. If Gertrude had loved you I should have cared enough about your future to take it in hand and smooth the path for you. You know your father would have felt hurt and disappointed in a step like this, while he is doing his best for you, has indeed given up his heart's desire that you should follow out your own bent."

Sherburne stood by the window looking down on the street. He could not accept any friendly overtures from

the man who was to marry Miss Maurice. All the delightful times were at an end. He had been deceived—since they both believed the same way they would make merry over his poor flouted love.

“My dear boy——”

That angered him afresh. At twenty, one had a right to a man’s feelings and dignity.

“Don’t, Uncle Con! Nothing can better it! I can’t talk about it. I—well I had better say good-night at once.”

“But we are not going to part this way.”

“I can’t congratulate you. I suppose you will be happy enough without it. I’ve just got to fight it out and endure it. I can’t stand anything more.”

He picked up his hat and took his coat on his arm, and the next instant had vanished.

Mr. Murray gave a soft, half-amused whistle and looked at the door a moment as if the angry fellow might return.

“He takes it harder than I imagined,” he mused. Had Gertrude unconsciously or from love of amusement encouraged him? Of course she knew when he proposed to visit her at home that she was a source of interest to him. Many girls would have enjoyed the flirtation. He could not see that she had been seriously at fault. Had *his* position biased her? She was doing very well, he knew that, but he wanted an unselfish regard. Was he quite sure he was getting it?

Sherburne stopped in the hall to put on his overcoat. The night was sharp and cold as he emerged into it. He had a desperate feeling that he would like to do something out of the ordinary course. Drinking he abhorred. There was a very respectable place where young men

went to play, and in the private rooms there was regular gambling. But he had only a little money with him, and he had promised his mother that he would shun such places.

So he tramped around scarcely noting whither he went. Then it came into his mind that he would go and have it out with Miss Maurice while he was in the humor. She had taken all the joy out of his life—why should she not know it!

Yet he hesitated a moment on the stoop. A lady and gentleman ascended the steps—he had seen them a time or two, and they all went in together.

There were several other guests in the parlor. He sat down in a small reception-room and awaited Miss Maurice. It was some time before she came; she had occupied the moments in working herself up to a desperate mood.

He bowed with a cold politeness. It was extremely awkward, and somehow she had no heart for platitudes.

“I am glad you have happened in,” she began, with evident embarrassment. “There was something I wanted you to know.”

“Then I *have* been fortunate. I was not sure I would be welcome.”

The voice had a touch of irony in it, and his demeanor was extremely lofty. It suddenly roused her sense of fun, and she wanted to laugh. That might have demolished the tragic aspect.

“I want to tell you that—” she colored vividly in the pause, “that I am engaged. It is best that you should know it at once, as it will not be a long engagement.”

“You are very honorable.”

“You said that—while I was free—you should keep

hoping." What made him take it so calmly, unless he had already been informed?

There was another long, awkward silence. She was really vexed with him.

"I gave up my hope an hour or more ago," he said, at length, in a cold tone. He meant to be as impressive as possible. "I was taking supper with my uncle. It shocked and surprised me. I had not supposed you could be tempted with the goods of this world, merely."

"I was not tempted by anything," she returned, with some spirit. "I will say now that I have long admired your uncle. Once I might have answered a suggestion in a manner to make it a proposal, and that was in our first acquaintance, and a time when temptation to such a step would have been doubly strong, as I was looking for a standing place in the world's great army and nothing seemed to promise a foothold. If I was not tempted then I am not likely to be tempted now when I have a secure position."

"You mean me to infer that you love him," Sherburne commented, with the scornful incredulity of youth.

"I love him," Gertrude Maurice said, simply. "For a year and more I have been comparing him with other men I have seen. It was a vague ideal in my mind, and I gave it no personality until we returned to the city. But when I met him again I knew what influence had shaped my ideal."

"Well, you have idealized him to the most extravagant end. Let me tell you that you will be bitterly disappointed. I can see how a girl might marry a man double her age, but that she should set him above everything, when there are so many splendid men in the world!"

"I do not set him above every person. I admit

frankly that there are nobler, better, wiser, grander men in the world. But he suits me. I am not a romantic girl. I should have to admire and esteem the man I love."

"I don't see what you find in him to admire," he flung out, angrily. "He is generous and jolly and"—yes, he would say it—"commonplace."

"And I am commonplace. I think you do not find a great many people in the world like Mrs. Drayton, even among geniuses," and she smiled. "And Mrs. Carew has such a fine, broad standard, and is so interested in the regeneration of mankind, indeed all the greater questions of life. I am rather frivolous and I do like my own gratification in the things that please me. I suppose I am selfish. Mr. Murray has a good deal of penetration and understands human nature. I am quite sure he does not idealize me at all, and I shall not have to live up to a standard that requires thought and care every moment of one's life. It would wear me out."

Her tone was a trifle impatient.

And this was the girl he had thought would be his inspiration; who would watch every effort, who would not only encourage him to achieve his best, but would bring her own best, and so transfuse it into his life that it should bear fruit about which there should be no question, no claim. Perhaps Milton embodied the dream of illimitable youth in his often quoted line:

"He for God only, she for God in him."

"O if you are going to reduce marriage to this commonplace level—" he paused and looked her over with his superior air—"well, then I shall be sorry for Uncle Con. He is worthy of something better."

"I think we get from each other those qualities and affections that we are capable of inspiring, or drawing out. If deep answers unto deep, how much more shall soul answer to soul. But the question or the desire must not be something of which the other soul is ignorant."

He was too angry for any deep reasoning. He wanted to hurt her, to sting her in some way, and no shaft was sharp enough. He wanted to show her that he despised her, yet down in his heart he felt that even now he would take her if he could. He would really triumph in her throwing over Uncle Con for himself. He was incensed that it was so.

She rose with a certain dignity.

"We shall not agree upon any point," she began, in a well-bred, unemotional tone. "Only you will remember that in our first talk in the park that evening I was frank and honest with you. I said then I did not love you. To make any marriage I hold that both parties should love."

"And you said you had no lover."

"I had none then," she answered, proudly.

"But you *were* in love without knowing that it would be returned!" he exclaimed, with an accent of triumph.

She colored warmly. "I do not think one can justly call it love. One does not feel the heat of the blaze when the wood is simply laid. We pass by more than one 'might have been,' and recognize later in life that they were among the things that never really were. I had no thought when I answered you that Mr. Murray would choose me from a world of charming women. And I am glad he has. That is the measure of my love for him. And now let me bid you good-night."

Her retreating gesture was unmistakable. He bowed with a kind of ironical loftiness, but uttered no word.

CHAPTER XV.

A HARMONY IN GOLD.

WITH all the arrogance and inexperience of youth Sherburne Beaumanoir thought he had gone through a fiery trial that would leave a mark on his whole life. He had been deceived in the woman he could have loved, nay, did love to a certain extent, as far as one could love in the face of denial. He began to collect and treasure up the moments that had been delightful, the smiles bestowed upon him, the quick glances from which he had wrested so much meaning, the little sentences that he fancied went deep into the true state of feeling.

She was a thorough-paced coquette. She had smiled on others, doubtless used the same charm of tongue and eye. All the time she had been warily considering the best chances for marriage. Of course she would never have waited three or four years for him. If it had not been Uncle Con it would have been some one else. And in the plenitude of his youthful generosity he sincerely pitied Uncle Con.

He was moody and careless. Mrs. Townsend's doors could not open any further welcome to him. He had barred himself out. Yet he knew now that he had enjoyed the trenchant talk, the music, the discussions where intelligent people had brought out some of their best. He found it also at Aunt Millicent's, but there was no bright appreciation to add to his own, no one to

translate fun or wit by the glance. He missed her everywhere else. And yet let him not forget that she was a scheming, ambitious woman.

Bertram suffered from Sherburne's unequal and irritable temper, and he missed his cheerful assistance. Aunt Lyndell noted the change and tried to fathom the cause, but he guarded his secret with a kind of resentful pride. He accepted invitations that he had quietly ignored before, and he soon found himself a favorite in society. A handsome young fellow who could dance well and was unexceptionable, was not likely to go a begging. But being up late at night did not add to his intellectual improvement.

"I don't know what has come across Sherburne," said Doctor Carew, much perplexed. "He misses lectures, his work is only half done, he is fitful and indifferent, and a day or two ago was really impertinent. If he does not want to study, he had better go home. The boys complain of him."

"He certainly has changed in a month. O Bertram, do you remember Gifford Lepage? It is a shame to recall anything derogatory to a man who has so nobly redeemed himself, but I have had a terrible fear about Sherburne ——"

"No; I do not think his temptation lies that way. Only young men at parties and suppers do drink more wine than is good for them and are led into danger. At the first sign of such a weakness, I should send him home. But a young man who means to do anything with his life cannot go to dances and eat late suppers every night and be bright and fresh in the morning. Yet I do not want to be unduly impatient. Many a young fellow has his fling and is none the worse for it."

"And we must remember that Sherburne is very attractive, as his father was before him."

Doctor Carew smiled.

"And we always come back to the fact that Leonard has made a fine man, and take courage. There is nothing vicious or malevolent in Sherburne, though just now he indulges in a good deal of youthful cynicism. But I hate to have him fall behind in his class, when he could do so well."

A day or two later they were at dinner when Lyndell glanced up with a mirthful smile and said suddenly —

"Guess the most unlikely person in the circle of our friends who means to commit matrimony! I was so amazed;—in fact I am not quite certain yet that the hero thereof is in earnest. Only the wedding day has been set."

"Unlikely?" repeated Doctor Carew. "Then that is some one past the bloom of youth—one of your protégés?"

"Some one I have known from my youth up;" and a mischievous light gleamed from the brown eyes.

"Uncle Con," Sherburne said, with the air of having been aware of it a long time.

"Con Murray!" Then Doctor Carew broke into a heartsome laugh. "But the greater puzzle to me is the person on whom his roving fancy has settled."

"Do you really think his fancy has roved so greatly? I have never heard of his being engaged."

"He claims to have had many disappointments."

"They have not soured him evidently."

"I think him one of the most delightful of men," declared the elder physician. "I can hardly imagine any one good enough for him, since you and Milly are out of the race."

"O papa Carew, how you do flatter!" And Dell bestowed her most charming smile upon him.

"All this complimentary talk does not impart any knowledge of the fair one to us. I want to know whether it is wise, or whether the banns ought to be forbidden."

"It certainly isn't wise," interposed Sherburne. "But I dare say no one will be able to forbid it. A girl half his age who takes him because she is sharp enough to know a good opportunity."

"O Sherburne, you really do not do her justice," said Lyndell, earnestly. "I thought Miss Maurice rather frothy and superficial at first, a most delightful summer girl, but any one who can win such warm encomiums from a woman like Mrs. Townsend, must have more than ordinary merit. I have liked her very much this winter."

"Not Gertie Maurice, *my* girl!" exclaimed Bert Beaumanoir, eagerly. "I was going to ask her presently to wait for me. It wouldn't be near so much on the other side."

"A dusty, musty professor would not have any time to devote to a wife," said Aunt Lyndell.

"And if it wasn't out of order, I'd jump up and clap hands while I executed a double shuffle," declared Bert. "I'm just wild with delight. You know she comes in Mrs. Kenneth's quite often and she is always so gay and jolly. Why didn't Uncle Con stay and let us congratulate him? Auntie Dell, can't you ask them both to dinner?"

"Not just now," said Mrs. Carew. "Miss Maurice went to Delaware this morning, and in a few days Uncle Con starts for Philadelphia with Mrs. Townsend, who is to address some convention or other. Then he goes on to Freeport, where he will be married. From thence they

go to Washington and Sherburne House and return home."

"O, it is too bad I can't see her! They ought to have let us know it long before. Sher, where did you hear of it?"

"Uncle Con told me soon after he was engaged. I was there at his rooms taking supper. I can't say that I *did* like it," replied the young man, with caustic dryness.

"But why? Gertie's splendid! O, I say! think of her being aunt to all of us! I just wish we could go to Robin's Point next summer and have it all over again."

"I do not believe Uncle Con would be willing to have you drag her around as you did that summer. She certainly had the best temper and the most fertile mind for inventing pleasures. Yet it seems a little queer. And I do think he is very much in love in his odd, amusing way. And Con was my hero par excellence. O, the lovely old times ——"

A certain tenderness suffused Lyndell Carew's beautiful eyes.

"O Auntie Dell, do tell us about him again to-night. My lessons are about done."

"O do, mamma!" said a chorus of voices.

"Now you have gotten yourself in the retrospection business," declared the doctor, in a tone of amusement.

"Auntie Dell," began Bertram, "do you suppose any girl out of a story ever had so many things happen to her? I do so like to hear about that old time when you danced under the apple-tree, and Grandmamma Murray was your mamma, because the beautiful English one was dead. Mamma tells us about it sometimes. And all the aunts and uncles were little children. Grandpapa ought to have kept the little old house and the apple-tree ——"

"But I liked that about the dog who wouldn't let you go that morning ——"

"And the running away," said Honor. The dessert was finished and Honor came and twined her arms around her mother's neck. "O mamma, how did you have the courage?"

"I like best the getting well at Grandpapa Carew's," and shy Millicent came to Aunt Neale and patted her soft, white hair. "I always think of it when I read Pilgrim's Progress. And the chamber whose name was Peace. And Aunt Milly bringing the lovely gown."

"If it was not for the 'two or three witnesses' I should think I was drawing on my imagination," declared Lyndell, glancing up at her husband. "O, children, children!"

They thronged about her now as they often did and she could hardly step this way or that. Sherburne rose haughtily, vexed that the announcement of Uncle Con's marriage had called forth no animadversion, and that no one had seen through the scheming Miss Maurice. Randolph Carew pleaded an engagement with a neighboring friend where he often spent his evenings, and the crowd of children led their mother to the sitting-room and gathered about her, putting cushions on the floor so they could surround her and clasp her hand and put a cheek on her knee or even caress her gown. They never tired of hearing about their mother's young life, and Uncle Con and Aunt Tessy. But it took Uncle Con to do the subject full justice.

He was very busy during the few intervening days. The tenant fortunately wanted to go out of his house, having business elsewhere. There were repairs to be made but the furnishing would be left until their return.

Gertrude had felt afraid at first that the marriage would be appointed for some church in the city, and was quite delighted when Mr. Murray assented so readily to her proposal.

"It is a benighted little country town," she explained. "And yet if there is any virtue in antiquity, there are families who have lived there two or three hundred years, with pedigrees that would drive some people about here wild with envy. But I often think of the toad that was buried in some Egyptian place or mummy pyramid and came to life, and was only a toad after all. The cycles of Cathay are not everything. Mamma is very proud of our family, and papa, who missed the fortune, had only one relative in the world that we ever knew of."

Mrs. Maurice was very much gratified by the announcement of her daughter's engagement, only she did not quite see why Mr. Murray could not have made up his mind that first summer, and so spared Gertrude all these months of servitude that *she* should hate to remember, no matter how pleasant they had been to the girl, or how much she had gained by the experience. Agnes was delighted, and took upon herself the preparations for the wedding, which were to be very simple. Gertrude would come home a week before. Mr. Murray would reach Freeport in the morning, and the marriage would be at noon.

It was with curiously contradictory emotions that Gertrude returned home this time. She knew now that she had grown entirely out of the old life, and she wondered if she had a right to do this? And she also understood that it would be useless to try to raise any of the others to her standard. The kindest and truest love would be to make them happy in their own way if that could be done. There were limitations to all natures. Mrs. Dray-

ton recognized that principle in her dealing with ambitious young people who sighed for a career. Mrs. Townsend did the same, though she had less patience with would-be geniuses.

There was a great deal of pleasure to be drawn from common things, and in a certain way it did demand a fine order of appreciation, and combination. Her mother's satisfaction would rest chiefly in the fact that her five daughters had married, for she would not be quite content if one of them remained single. Agnes' delight was in a home that was truly her own. She made it a centre from which to radiate all benign influences. She, Gertrude, had ceased to question whether Agnes loved Mr. Rowdon or not from the simple fact that when she accepted a duty she performed it religiously. She was not given to straying out of her pasture, she lingered under shady trees when the midday sun was hot, she found the choicest bits of grass and clover blooms. Could one control love? Perhaps the mistake was in considering ideal love the only kind.

Agnes and Luella came down to meet her. Agnes took in her radiant eyes, the softened expression about her mouth and the general impression of happiness. Lu wondered how she had made her complexion so fine and clear, and at the plumes that nodded on her hat, the velvet roses drooping at the back, the fur-trimmed coat that fitted her jauntily; and the cloth gown with its unmistakable style.

The only thing that had changed much at home was Elsie, who had shot up into a tall girl. She went to school of course, but to Agnes' sorrow she was not bright at her books. The entertaining weeklies that Gertrude sent home had no interest for her outside of the cooking

and housewifely column. They had achieved a fine looking, rather elderly colored woman, who never objected to younger hands sharing her work. But Mr. Maurice was well cared for, and gaining a little in flesh.

Mrs. Maurice kept mostly to her room during the cold months, and had a cheerful log fire on the hearth. She still darned her laces and the tablecloths, she read and dozed and carped at all things, and bewailed the fact of the lost fortune. She received Gertrude with a great deal of impressiveness, since her opportunities in the great world had culminated in marriage.

"Though I *do* think he might have paid us a little more attention than just to come the morning of the marriage," she said, when Gertrude had laid aside her hat and coat and seated herself in the glow of the cheerful blaze. "His letter to your father was very proper and respectful, but I should like the town to know there was absolutely nothing reprehensible or ungentlemanly about him. And we really shall not get acquainted with him at all. When one's daughters marry, a mother feels that she would like to know the sort of man to whom she is trusting her child."

The weak, complaining tone was what Gertrude had heard all her life, but this aspect of the case had not presented itself with any special force. She had written freely to Agnes about Mr. Murray, she had sent several dutiful letters to her mother on the subject.

"He is a very busy man, mamma, and it would have been hard for me to get away, since I was to resign my position. If I had been living at home he would have visited me here of course."

"And you know I never did approve of this chasing round the world when one has a home. It robs a woman

of delicacy and self-respect, and I think a man never feels quite the same about her. The proper thing would have been for you to come home as soon as you were engaged."

To miss that delicious informality of calls morning noon or night, just as Mr. Murray had half an hour's leisure, would have taken away half the charm of the engagement. And truth to tell she needed her salary for her wedding outfit.

"But Mrs. Townsend was like a mother to me," she interposed.

"No woman can be like a mother who has never had a child. What does she know of the responsibilities, the anxieties? And a person who has no more refined and womanly aim than running about the world and lecturing on all sorts of subjects! I have often felt that it was not a suitable place for you, but you would have your own way."

Gertrude made no reply. She could have persuaded Mr. Murray to come before, but she had admitted that the town was dull, the hotel very primitive, and she knew they could not well entertain a man used to all the appliances of rather luxurious living. She had tried hard not to have any sense of shame about the poverty, the sort of slipshod living, the lack of the little observances of society, and her mother's inconsequence as well as the quality that seemed so like pretentiousness. A young man might have amused himself, she really was afraid it would prove tiresome to Mr. Murray, since they could not well go rambling about or sit out of doors.

Her father appeared heartily delighted. She spent much of her time with Agnes who had planned everything out, it seemed. Luella was to be maid of honor in

a light blue cashmere gown and picture hat ; the little girls were to wear white over pink slips and carry baskets of flowers. Gertrude had announced in the beginning that she was to be married in a dark blue cloth traveling costume, and blue hat, and go away directly, but she did finally consent to returning home for a half hour and cutting the bride cake.

"If it could have been in the evening so that we might have had a dance," complained Luella, a little hurt also that she was not to walk up the aisle with an attendant.

That there was no wedding trousseau to be shown and no gifts to amaze the townspeople was another grievance to Mrs. Maurice. Still, she had to admit that her son-in-law was distinguished looking and unexceptionable ; cordial in his manner, and with no superior airs. She put on her black velvet gown and point lace, and it seemed as if all the town turned out at the church and dropped in to the reception.

"I like him so much," Agnes said. "I am sure you will be happy. And Gertie, there is no pleasure like one's own home."

Con Murray put his wife in the seat by the window, and sat down beside her, as they were starting out on their new life. Then he smiled at her and she thought there was no blessing in life like love.

They were still in the midst of gayeties at Washington. Congress had been more than usually interesting, and there had been an influx of foreign visitors. As soon as Princess had gone home she had been sent for as there was something special that might never occur again. And now Mrs. Beaumanoir had come up, as much to welcome Uncle Con's wife as to have a glimpse of the

giddy whirl. Gertrude found herself received with a cordiality that touched her, knowing the fine quality of these people.

"And when you see how happy I mean to make him, and how much I shall love him, Princess," Gertrude exclaimed, when the young girl had come in to dine and go to the theatre afterward with them, as Uncle Con declared he wanted one little bit of her all to himself, "you will quite forgive me for taking him. And we are going to have a pretty home and gather all the girls in it as Mrs. Drayton does. We count on a great deal of you."

Princess colored delicately.

"I want you to forget that," she said, in a soft, appealing tone. "I *was* hurt and jealous, for I thought then no one had so good a right to Uncle Con as I. Somehow we had never thought of *his* caring for any one. It was not because it was *you*. I should have felt the same about Ruth or Kitty Saxon. And the knowledge came so suddenly upon me. But I am older and ever so much wiser, and when I knew that he cared for you and wanted you in his life— O Gertie, I am afraid I never could have forgiven you then if you had not loved him. And I was so glad ——"

There were tears in her beautiful eyes, yet she smiled through them like sunshine in a summer shower. Gertrude clasped her in her arms.

"And it was your lovely generosity that brought it all about. I sometimes wonder what my life would have been if you had not invited me to your splendid island! Do you realize what munificent things you have done out of your unselfish soul, your desire that other people shall be happy? So few think of it. It has made my life

radiantly complete, it has blessed Ruth Ensign and given her the dearest friend, a second mother. O, do you ever hear about Kitty Saxon?"

"Yes," answered Princess, coloring vividly. Kitty's letters were peans of thanksgiving for all she had learned and enjoyed that summer. She was living a nobler, truer life, learning the duties of sister and daughter. Sometimes Princess read parts of them aloud to her mother, but the adoring praise from the full heart was meant for no eyes but hers and therefore sacred.

"Kitty is very well and happy though nothing remarkable has happened to her. But it is queer," and she glanced up archly, "it was Uncle Con's idea altogether, the very goodness of it. He proposed we should invite some girls who were not likely to have a summering elsewhere."

"And we never quite know all that will come out of a little kindness. It makes us quite humble and ashamed sometimes that we do not do more little things instead of waiting to do the great ones. Is that the weak things of the world confounding the wise?"

Certainly Uncle Con was very happy, and Gertie for all her fun and nonsense adored him.

Princess wondered at times why the adoration, and the knowledge that another had the best right to her favorite uncle gave her no pain. He was still as charming and devoted to her. And the old plan that she should be the housekeeper in his pretty home would have been quite impracticable. She had so many duties to others. It was such a busy, happy world—yes, she was quite sure it was happy.

There was a rather long wait between the second and third scene of the play that evening. Some one came

down the aisle and paused to speak to Mr. Murray. Princess' face was in a rosy flush. Gertrude felt rather than saw it.

This was Mr. Sevier. Mr. Murray had met him the day before and now introduced him to Gertrude. Then he leaned over and spoke to Princess.

"I wonder," he asked, presently, of the gentleman sitting next to Princess, "if I could induce you to change seats with me. Mine is on the east aisle and equally desirable."

"Oh, with pleasure," and the gentleman rose as he thought, "'This must be that pretty little girl's lover.'"

"Thank you very much," said Mr. Sevier.

He took the seat and began a low conversation with Princess. He had been delighted to meet Mr. Murray, whom he had heard of through various channels, and had seen the notice of his marriage in the papers, as he was in some degree public property.

"What a pretty young wife," he continued with a smile.

Was she pretty? Yes, she looked so now with that serene and joyous smile.

"She was my schoolmate," Princess answered.

"And is she going to be aunt to all you girls?" he asked in an amused tone.

"O no," smilingly. "He is mamma's brother, so he has only us Beaumanoirs in his train."

Mr. Sevier nodded.

"I have not seen you since Sunday. Where have you hidden yourself away?"

It was a very tender tone even if it was a whisper.

"Mamma came up. And we have been so engrossed with my uncle."

"I heard you were coming here to-night. I bought out a friend's interest on the chance of seeing you. But I began to think I never should find you. That large woman over yonder in the velvet coat hid you from my view."

Princess leaned over a little to look.

"And you were not at Mrs. Headley's last evening."

The tone bespoke regret that was flattering, yet Princess did not rejoice in it.

"We found we had to send regrets in the morning."

"I didn't stay at all late. I missed you and your cousins in the dances."

Mr. Sevier had a true Southerner's love for dancing.

"But there were other girls that danced," she returned, archly, compelling herself to smile carelessly.

He made a just perceptible motion of the shoulders.

Then the curtain went up. They had come to the love scene of the play, that was almost a tragedy. The exquisite color of youth and sympathy, and perhaps a deeper feeling kept wandering over the sweet girl face. But at last triumphant love was crowned victor.

"I was afraid it was not going to end right," Mr. Sevier said, with a little catch in his voice. "Plays have no excuse for ending unhappily."

"I suppose real life has at times," Princess replied, gravely.

"Love ought always to bring happiness in the end. The trials enhance the real value and strength of it. I know of course that it does not."

They were pouring out into the aisles, friends bowing or speaking briefly. Mr. Murray glanced over Gertrude's shoulder and nodded assentingly to the young man who took upon himself the protection of Princess.

"Let us go and have a little refreshment," Mr. Murray said. "I am thankful the wisacres have decided it is a good thing to eat late in the evening or before retiring. When your sympathies have been wrought upon there is a drain in the physical. Did you ever consider, Mr. Sevier, how many theories there are in regard to what you must do or refrain from, to keep the feeble spark of life in good shining order. Every few years there is a revolution and the old regulations are cast out. We still live. I believe there are more deaths of old people now than any time in the previous history of the world."

"Then it would appear that old age is the thing we should beware of, since that seems most fatal."

Mr. Murray laughed. "There are no old people any more until you do come to the death rate," he returned.

They had a rather jolly little supper, and at the entrance to the hotel Mr. Sevier said "good-night."

"I have been hearing strange tales of you, demure little Miss Princess," began her uncle, in a teasing tone of confidence. "Pearl declared this morning that you had more admirers than the other girls, and that every time you went home there were so many lamentations they were forced to recall you at once. I did admire the aplomb of this young man to-night in asking a stranger to change seats with him."

"'Nothing venture nothing have,' " appended Gertrude.

"He seems a very nice young fellow. But I expect to carry you up to the city with me. Will Washington be shrouded in mourning, or will they follow us?"

"They are not in such solemn earnest as that," returned Princess, lightly.

She was to stay with them. After Gertrude had seen her disposed of for the night, as she stood taking pins out of her laces and her hair, she said,

"Mr. Sevier *is* very much in earnest. I do wonder if Princess ——"

"Princess is hardly out of childhood. The idea!"

"Girlhood, you mean. And girls have fancies, and fancies ripen in congenial soil."

"During the honeymoon it is your bounden duty to pay attention to your own love-making," he said, with some half-laughing kisses.

"And have no eyes or ears for any one beside ——"

"Your own familiar tyrant."

But he was thinking how strange it was for little Princess to be grown up enough to have a lover when it seemed only the other day that his sister Tessy was married to Leonard Beaumanoir. But then Sherburne was old enough to have a fling at the tree of knowledge. How the years had run on! Children were the dial marks.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOLD IN A GLANCE.

“**L**ISTEN to this,” said Mr. Murray the following morning, as they sat over their breakfast. “The next lecture in the Smithsonian course is to be to-night. And I have a mind to make you guess who is to distinguish himself.”

“Because you think I have all the lecturers of note written down in the back part of my brain?” asked Gertrude, saucily. “Let me see—this is scientific, so it is not Mrs. Townsend.”

“You ungrateful girl! I have half a mind to report you. Now Princess! She has lost her chance.”

“Uncle Carew. He was here in the early part of the winter and addressed some convention.”

“You certainly will not make your fortune at guessing how many beans there are in the jar.”

“But we can both tell how many black beans make five,” retorted Princess. “This is a problem. The other mere guesswork.”

“How trivial and inconsequent you both are! And how soon old friends fade out of mind. Now in the summer I remember so well that I could recall nearly every one who figured in it, when you girls, like a flock of sheep, went star-gazing and peered into closets and wash-bowls, and pans and cups, to see the beginnings of things, and you have forgotten the leader thereof.”

“O, not Professor Kenneth!” cried Gertrude.

“Why not, I should like to know? Have you fallen

so far from your first ideal that you cannot admit any wisdom remaining in it?"

"He was not my ideal that I remember," said the young wife. "I really think, then, it was Bert Beaumanoir, but he had a divided heart for me. Can't we go and hear him? Princess, wouldn't you like to?"

"Yes," replied Princess, under her breath, with a sound almost like a sigh. It was not what she had meant to say, and now she was chilled with a sort of surprise that she had uttered it.

"If there are no other engagements," she continued, recovering her self-possession, and wondering if she had turned pale.

"That is quite odd. O, let us go by all means. How do you get admitted?" and Gertrude glanced up.

"I shall manage it some way. O ——"

The waiter handed him a card. He glanced at it. "Bring the lady up here, and some hot coffee," he ordered.

The lady was Mrs. Beaumanoir.

"O you lazy people," she exclaimed. "I am a fairy godmother who has come in a carriage, and it is a fine, sunny morning for driving. Aunt Julia and Ray offer you a luncheon as a reward for a visit. Violet has sent the carriage to be returned at one."

"Capital. Take the ladies and I will join you at lunch. And Tessy, Professor Kenneth lectures to-night. Let us go and give him a welcome."

"O yes, and hear direct from the boys. How did you know it?"

He passed her over the paper and poured out a cup of coffee.

"If you are going to drive you will need something to

stir your blood. Meanwhile I will find out about this, and get admittance for half a dozen. When he catches sight of our eager faces, he will feel inspired. Then I have some other matters on hand. The day wanes."

They all rose. It was a magnificent morning, and Gertrude's one previous visit to Washington had been brief and hurried. This was delightful. The moments flew by on wings; there was so much to see that they were a little late and found Mr. Murray before them. He had also invited Ray to join their evening entertainment, and she had accepted with delight.

They dismissed the carriage, as they meant to have a little visit with Aunt Julia.

"It's so odd to think Gertie Maurice should be your uncle's wife," exclaimed Ray, with a half eager, half surprised light in her eyes. "She has grown prettier, I am sure. I was once a little jealous that Uncle Win should admire her. What silly things girls are! Except you, Princess. You were always sweet and wise."

"Not always," said Princess, faintly.

"And you like her? You do not really mind?"

"I am afraid I was a little jealous once, as well." Princess laughed and flushed. "But she *does* suit Uncle Con, and he loves her. I think they will be very happy."

"If she loves him. You know we never did quite make her out. But you had her all the summer at Melchias. O, I shall be just delighted to see Professor Kenneth. And Mrs. Kenneth sent me such a lovely invitation to visit them. Do you mean to go up to the city, Princess? Uncle Con says he intends to take you."

"O, I must go home. I have been away so much."

Princess seemed to herself in a sort of dream. She

talked and said all the bright things that came into her mind, but there was another side to her that did not seem to warm up with all the gayety. Uncle Con made a good story out of the way Mr. Sevier had appropriated her, and Ray gave instances of his devotion that brought a bright color to her cheek.

She had let it go on with a vague sort of consciousness that fate determined many things. She had been much admired, and of all the people she had met, Mr. Sevier pleased her most. She had more than once sheltered herself from other obtrusive attentions under the shadow of his regard.

Her father had been proud of her pretty successes, much prouder than she knew. His disappointment about Sherburne did not decrease as time went on, the opportunity the boy had thrown aside grew more important every day. And then Doctor Carew really was not enthusiastic over him, while he had no end of praise for Bertram. So he had come to take a very fervent interest in his sweet, attractive daughter, and he liked young Sevier, who had a good family and some money back of him, and was quite a favorite with society mammas. He had a feeling of elation that Princess could hold her own so well with Pearl. And girls married sooner or later. Marriage really was best for them. His sister, Fanny, had gained nothing by staying single, he remembered. She had been twice as lovable and attractive after she was married.

Princess would fain have excused herself from joining the party, but there was not a shadow of pretext. She had done nothing to tire herself out, she could not even conjure up a headache. There was some inexplicable shrinking that she was afraid to look into closely enough

to give a reason. The Christmas visit *had* tried her resolution, but she was growing more steadfast in the path she considered honorable. If the engagement of Ruth could once be announced, she would have courage enough to go on bravely.

There certainly was a fine audience. Intelligence was well represented, and society was not in the background. The winter's "fad" had been a renewed interest in intellectual pursuits.

Professor Kenneth had taken on a little more flesh, and stood much more erect. Home life had developed the silent side of his nature, and his sister-in-law's influence was slowly evolving the attractive man lying dormant. He had come to understand that mere personality had much to do with enforcing truths and gaining attention, and that any advantage satisfactorily used for the good of mankind did not tend to personal vanity. He was so much more interesting than some of the recent speakers that he really delighted his audience.

Now and then he half paused to appeal to his hearers, and in doing this he caught sight of Mr. Murray. He glanced again. That must be his wife. There was Mrs. Beaumanoir and Ray Stanwood and—yes, Princess, who had been so interested in all these subjects at Melchias. A thrill of pleasure sped through him that they had cared to come, and he received a new inspiration, his voice had a clearer sound.

There was some applause when he had finished. He begged his immediate friends to excuse him a moment and hurried down, for he saw the party were in no haste to leave.

"What a pleasant rencounter," he exclaimed, taking Mr. Murray's hand. You surprised all your friends

finely, but I suppose congratulations are not amiss. You have many heartsome wishes, Mrs. Murray, from your old friends. And Mrs. Beaumanoir ——”

As he took Princess’ small hand in his, their eyes met. She was utterly unconscious of the betraying sweetness in hers, but she saw the knowledge in his that she knew then her heart had hungered for. She forgot Ruth, everything in the overwhelming revelation. He felt the hand tremble in his, he longed to hold it but there was Miss Stanwood with her charming smile.

They all seemed to talk together as they went down the aisle, quite in the rear of the crowd.

“It was a great surprise,” Mr. Murray was explaining. “I saw it in this morning’s paper, and I said we must come to swell the audience so you would not be chilled by empty seats. But we might have saved our pity. You had a very appreciative assemblage.”

“I am thankful for the pity, even, if that brought you,” smiling with a transfiguring gladness.

“O, the girls were eager for a chance to fill their minds once more with solid substance, after dancing and flirting all winter. Do you rush back to-night?”

“O no. I have to attend a meeting to-morrow morning, and I dine at night with some guests from Germany. Meanwhile—may I call upon you, Mrs. Beaumanoir? Are you all staying together?”

Tessy really longed to see him. He would know if matters were not going right with Sherburne. So they exchanged cards, and the professor found Princess’ hand to press in it a meaning good-bye, since it did not evade him.

The subtle consciousness that she was held in something more exquisitely personal than mere esteem thrilled

her with a power she could not quite control. She had been shutting it out for months, not even glancing at the possibility. Though she had a fine, sensitive organization she was not morbid. She did not covet what could not of right belong to her. And she recognized the fact that Ruth would have all the opportunities to foster a regard; she would also have the silent influence of Mrs. Kenneth's affectionate preference.

The intellectual life had a great charm for her. She could content herself with the round of daily duties, and she was too retiring to enter any arena of thought herself. She did almost envy Aunt Millicent her gift of attracting a wide and wonderful interest. She had written schoolgirl verses, one or two little things had been set to music by a friend who said they sang themselves. No one knew or ever would know how she would have liked being a genius and stirring the hearts of others.

But she must be content to shine with reflected light, and for the last six months she had been accepting her duties as a daughter and sister with a sweetness that was almost resignation, that would attain to that grace by and by, though she knew it had not quite reached it yet. Giving up was not always resignation.

She had been very happy during these weeks with Aunt Julia and Ray, and at Aunt Amory's. Every day had been full of pleasure, and praise that was not altogether flattery, the enjoyment that is so adorable in youth. She *did* like it. But she would not want a whole lifetime of it. Aunt Violet found better things, but then Aunt Violet had a husband and children, and Daisy might be a genius.

She remembered that the old aunts, Miss Sherburne and Miss Carrick, had lived long single lives and were

happy in their old age. But when a young girl not yet out of her teens, looks down the long, long years and does not see quite the thing she wants, no story of love to illumine life, the prospect is not inspiring. Only one does not often indulge in such farsight, and neither can one live in the future. It has to be the present, first.

So Princess had been making herself happy in the enjoyment of society. Pearl simply absorbed everything and took a delicious satisfaction.

"The sort of pain in it," said Violet Osborne, one day, "is its evanescence. You know it is shifting, changing, dropping out. There are those two charming Fairfax girls that I should like to have a lifelong friendship with. They are going abroad in a fortnight for two years. Both will probably be married. Our lives will run on different lines. Then there is that lovely Celia Nixon. This is her father's last year as a representative, and he is disenchanted with politics. Celia will go back home and marry some one."

"And Violet Osborne will go back to California and marry some one," said Pearl, imitating her cousin's tone of discouragement, at which the two others laughed. "Girls, marriage is the grand panacea after all. But let us not hurry too much. Life is still sweet."

There had been so many happy marriages, Princess remembered, so few unhappy ones. Did her mother have an ideal before she was married, and did her father just fill it, she wondered.

She tried not to speculate on marriage, and said over some verses to make her sleepy. She had a great many to love her. Perhaps she and Bertram would be the sort of friends some famous people had been, and she could take a fervent interest in his life.

A note came for her in the morning. "She must not forget they were to go to Celia Nixon's last reception, and to make some other calls. Then there was the dance at Mrs. Rheid's. She was to send her party gown over, to come to dinner and stay all night. The carriage would call at three. No excuses received. After that Uncle Con could take his turn."

"O yes, mamma, I had almost forgotten about the dance. Mrs. Rheid has been so charming to us, and we are coming to the last of the gayeties. She goes to Florida next week. And Celia Nixon is such a lovely girl. O dear, to think you may never see some people again!"

"And the professor is to call this afternoon."

A quick rift of color went up the sweet, youthful face, and the eyes drooped with a peculiar consciousness.

"You will like to talk to him about the boys. You will not miss me."

"I think he will," said the mother, at a venture. "He was very glad to see you last night."

"He was glad to see all of us. I can imagine the surprise and pleasure."

A quick ear detected a certain tremulousness in the tone. But a young girl's heart was too sacred to be meddled with.

Only Tessy Beaumanoir had a secret, inexplicable sympathy with the patient, humble lover, whose self-esteem where women were concerned was so small, and to whom this one girl-woman would be the love of a lifetime. How different men were! Leonard had rushed in at the very beginning of his fancy, and swept all before him by his vehemence. Dared she give the lover any encouragement to take home with him?

The carriage came with the two girls and the maid. There was a curious embarrassment as Princess kissed her mother. And then she exclaimed in a breathless manner —

“Mamma, you will explain that I had to go.”

Miss Nixon's reception was rather sad with its farewells. The calls were made, the dinner dispatched, and Mrs. Amory superintended the toilettes of the three girls, whom she was to entrust to Mrs. Rheid for the evening. Pearl was in high spirits, Violet rather pensive and Princess thoughtful.

She had need to be thoughtful. Mr. Sevier was early in the field.

“What a lovely card!” he exclaimed. “‘White and unwritten’ still. You see it even stirs me to poetry. I am almost ashamed to mark it up, but I wish ——”

“What do you wish? I may not be in a generous mood again this evening?” she returned with a smile. “O, there are three I am to keep for Mr. Rheid. He is going south with his mother. It has been a day of farewells.”

She took her card and made a little star at the three dances.

“O, I wanted that mazourka especially,” he said, in a disappointed tone. “And my wish was ——”

“What is a wish worth that is so hard to remember?”

“It isn't hard to remember. It was—that I could be as sure of writing on some one's heart,” in a low, pleading voice.

“Mrs. Glasse's recipe——” with a smile of the utmost gayety she could command.

“Yes, one has to have some influence in a heart before

one can awake a lasting interest, or hope for a permanent impression."

Princess colored with embarrassment.

Some one else came to ask for her card.

"O, you have taken too many," to Mr. Sevier.

"Three is the utmost limit. You must revise them."

He did it unwillingly. Then Mr. Rheid came as his was the opening dance.

Mr. Sevier she noticed went over to the window and talked to a wall-flower who was neither young nor pretty, but who had a sister with both requisites. And Princess knew he was watching *her*. He came back to her at once.

How had she allowed him to take this delicate air of appropriation with her? And why did she inwardly resent it now? It seemed as if she had liked him very much, but his demeanor made her think sharply of the future, and she did not want him in her future. She was sure of that now. A day or two ago she had not put the question to herself, for she was hoping there was no question.

Then he went over to Violet, who was always ready to talk about Princess, and while he talked he wondered.

"Do you think Miss Beaumanoir cares very much for Spencer Rheid?" he asked.

"It depends upon the sense in which you use the word. They are very friendly. Mrs. Rheid likes her above all the girls. She would keep her singing forever. And poor Spencer can't distinguish one tune from another. O yes, I think he does know the 'Star Spangled Banner' when he can see the waving of the flags."

"It would be martyrdom to live with one who had no soul for music."

“No ear, simply in this case. He *does* like the sound. And he dances well. You never would connect ‘treason, stratagems nor spoils’ with him, he is so jolly and frank.”

“Spoils, if he became a politician; stratagems if he were deeply in love. As for treason ——”

“You shall not traduce him to me. I am fond of him myself.”

Then Princess passed to a handsome young midshipman. They seemed to have something very amusing. Would his turn never come around again?

When it did come he was quite certain of his regard for her, but the very consciousness made him reticent. One could not lead up to love affairs in a ballroom. A look or a clasp of the hand might tell the tale if both understood or were mutually attracted. He could recall times when he had been thrilled with unmistakable preference on her part. But now she seemed curiously on guard. Or was it because he was watching for an opportunity?

There was a dainty little supper, but Spencer Rheid took her in when he found Pearl was engaged. He would have enjoyed the prettiest girl in the room, but when Pearl laughingly declined and Princess glanced up with irresistibly shy persuasion, he was comforted.

The carriage came for them at one. Sevier saw her descending the stairs in her white wrap with its scarlet hood and ribbons.

“O, are you going so soon?” disappointedly.

Some one had stopped the other girls on the landing. They were quite alone. Before she could answer he exclaimed in a vehement tone:

“Are you staying at the Amorys? Can I see you—to-morrow?”

"Yes and no," returned Princess, steadying her voice and dropping her eyes after one glance at his. "I go there to-night. To-morrow is promised to my uncle. On Saturday we return to Sherburne."

"But, Princess," under his breath. "If I dared call you *my* Princess ——"

"O, your party are not going!" cried some one who had just espied her as the two girls came trooping down the stairs. "Mrs. Rheid, come and stop this barbarous proceeding."

"Remember Cinderella and have mercy upon us," exclaimed Pearl, laughingly. "For we never could outlive the mortification of going to rags before you all. And we have not even a glass slipper to attract the prince."

Princess took Violet's arm and said a general good-night.

"I do wish at times that we didn't have to go home so early," said Pearl, plaintively. "You just get into the spirit of the thing. You can sometimes coax mamma a little, and that is the reason I think she likes to send the carriage, and settle the responsibility upon us. It is too bad!"

Princess shrank into the corner, her cheeks burning, her pulses throbbing, and an uncomfortable half condemnation in her heart. She should have begun her care before. She must have known whither this devotion was tending. She was sorry and ashamed of having allowed him to come so near. Was it not coquetting?

Why could she not care for him? He certainly was worthy of esteem. And she knew her father would interpose no objection. She had enjoyed his society, and he was intelligent; one could always be proud of him.

They had similar tastes, only—were his a little higher and finer? for he liked Browning, and she had only gone as far as “Men and Women” in her understanding of the poet. And he knew so much about art, he had taken two vacations abroad. Even Uncle Amory approved of him.

She fell asleep with the unanswerable “why” of youth beating up and down her brain.

CHAPTER XVII.

POISONING TRUTH.

GERTRUDE MURRAY found a warm welcome at Sherburne House. The children remembered her. As for Uncle Con, the neighborhood turned out with invitations, and there were so many dinners and teas that the few days were lengthened into a full week.

He had insisted all along that Princess should go home with them.

"There is all the house to be furnished," he said, "and Gertrude must have some one to aid and abet her in all sorts of extravagance. You are to have the first choice of rooms, for we expect you to come early in January and remain until after the day before Christmas. By that time we shall have spent all our money, and we will close our house, Gertie and I retiring to the back kitchen, so as to escape giving Christmas presents. No, Miss Princess, we shall not take any denial. We would not dare to go back without you. We should be mobbed."

Violet wrote entreating letters as well. There were invitations, if the season was almost over.

"Mr. Sevier is devoted to us," she announced. "I shrewdly suspect it is because we are next to the rose. Princess, you demure little midget, I am afraid you are dangerous, after all."

Among her notes on Saturday morning was one from the gentleman himself, begging permission to have the pleasure of a brief visit at Sherburne.

She had felt somehow between two fires, but this blaze came the nearest to scorching. She would go home with Uncle Con. There were so many relatives, and she had not seen them in months.

She wrote a formal little note in reply to Mr. Sevier. It might have been taken out of an etiquette book. And he wondered if she were really sorry. It would not shut him entirely out of hope if she were. But at present there was no further step to take.

Yes, one could not help liking Gertie Maurice in her new character, only it did seem to Princess as if she and Uncle Con were playing at being married, they said such amusing things to each other, and were so unsentimental.

Gertrude was quite resolved that Princess should love her, and should miss nothing out of Uncle Con's tenderness. He insisted she should go to the hotel with them, but she felt Aunt Millicent had a claim on her. And there was Auntie Dell and the boys.

The house seemed in the first stage of confusion. Workmen had loitered. But Gertie and Princess picked their way about it the next day, holding up their skirts, and being piloted around by Uncle Con. This was to be library, this smoking-room, and a den on the third floor where he could indulge in unlimited tempers when things went wrong. Now they could take their choice.

"Your room must adjoin mine," declared Gertrude. "I may let the other girls in it when they deign to visit me, but it is not to be a guest chamber. We shall christen it 'Princess' room.' And when I see anything that especially suggests you, for there are some articles that have a Princess-y air, I shall buy it at once."

"How good you are to me."

"I love you, Princess. All the happiness of my life has come through you."

There was a general rejoicing at Doctor Carew's when she walked in upon them. They were so joyous and noisy, that Auntie Dell insisted it was equal to "a strawberry festival in an orphan asylum." Bertram considered that he had the best claim to her, and though he had written her voluminous letters, there still seemed a great deal to say. Sherburne was rather lofty. His recent experiences had added a great deal to his wisdom, he thought, and it had taken on a severe and gloomy tinge, while its main indulgence was biting little sentences, some of them culled from extensive reading. The Carew children were wildly enthusiastic about her, except Randolph who was so intent upon study that he had no eyes nor ears for anybody.

Then there were a host of Murray cousins.

"I sometimes feel as if I was related to half the world," Princess said mirthfully to Uncle Con.

True, Morna Murray was the presiding genius of a Scottish castle, one son was out in China in the tea trade, another on the western coast, but Con and James and Densie were in the city, the two latter with homes and flocks of their own.

Grandmamma Murray was smaller and lovelier than ever, with snowy white hair, pink cheeks and infantile complexion. For the last fifteen years she had bewailed the fact of her son Con being such a roaming fellow, and having no home or wife of his own. And now her last wish had been gratified.

She took Gertrude to her heart with open arms.

"My dear," she said in her soft tone, every word of which had a delicious lingering sound like music—Con,

senior, said she had never spoiled her voice by scolding, which was true enough,—“My dear, all I’ll ask of you is to love him and make him happy. He’s waited a long while to settle, and that leaves fewer years for the joy, so you must improve every day. There’s no fear of people having too much happiness, though they do say sorrow and care are a kind of discipline, but to my thinking the good Lord doesn’t send half that He is credited with but we make it up ourselves by our own wrong and careless doing.”

Grandmamma Murray made a feast to welcome the wife of her firstborn son.

“O, are you not going?” Princess asked of Sherburne. He seemed so changed in these days that she hardly knew him, so lofty and captious and so frigidly polite at times. “Sherburne, what has happened?”

Sherburne was pacing the floor in a slow, melancholy fashion. He was rather hurt that Princess had not remarked before that something had gone wrong with him.

“The matter is that I can’t endure to see you all go down to—Gertie Maurice, as if there had never been another woman in the world! She is a selfish, heartless flirt, and schemed to make a good marriage. I don’t see how she could take Uncle Con in after all his experience, but she blinded even him.”

The tone was one of sharp anger and the young fellow’s face was scarlet.

Princess stood amazed.

“Why—I thought—” hesitatingly, “that you liked her very much. Surely you did at Christmas.”

“I was a fool then! I may as well confess that she used her bewildering arts on me. I’ve haunted Mrs. Townsend’s for a chance to talk to her. And I thought

she *did* prefer me to the men who hung about her and at whom she laughed sily. Maybe if no one else had offered she would have married me, at least, have been engaged, but she threw me over fast enough when ——”

He paused with a pricking sensation in the inner monitor called conscience. But he was too proud and too angry to amend the statement.

Princess drew several long inspirations, her eyes growing larger and deeper with indignation and surprise.

“Did you really love her?” The tone was tremulous and not far from tears.

“Well——” he began to pace rapidly, and seemed to consider. “I liked her very much that day at the luncheon. She was so bright, and easy to talk to, and full of amusing suggestions. She has a way of spurring you up to your best. And I thought she was in earnest. After all she is just a young girl, younger than I am. Some people are engaged years,” in an apologizing tone.

“You didn’t ask her to marry you?” Even inexperienced Princess saw the folly of that.

“Yes, I did. I am going to tell you all so you may understand the case. I don’t care for the others,” disdainfully. “And she admitted there was not any likelihood of her being married for years, and—I supposed she meant to wait. Girls say a good many queer inconsequent things and wait to be coaxed and all that. Then I went to work in real earnest. I meant to study hard and be something for her sake. It was a great aim, you know, and roused all the courage within me.”

Princess thought of mamma’s love, and papa’s pride in him, and the little hurt at his preference for another course they had both been ambitious and solicitous for

him to take. How papa would have been delighted to keep him near and watch his daily improvement and the growing into friendship as well as relationship. Couldn't all that affection inspire one? Must it take the favor of some girl to rouse true ambition?

"Then Uncle Con asked her and she jumped at the chance. He's almost twice as old, but he can give her most of the things women think so much about. And position. There'll be lots of people to go down to Mrs. Con Murray, and plenty of society men ready to flirt with her. Admiration is the great thing with her. She isn't really pretty, but she's stylish, and has a curious kind of fascination, and she'll take wonderfully now. I am sorry for Uncle Con—that's all. And I'll get over it, only it seems as if the big aim of life was gone. O, you needn't look so horrified! I shall not take to drinking. I've seen some fellows silly drunk, and if I once got there myself I never could hold up my head afterward. I'm not going to do anything desperate—no selfish woman is worth a man's going to ruin for her."

Princess was really bewildered. Her sympathies were with her brother; she was indignant that any woman should trifle with him, she was angry too that any one should not love him when he was so handsome and charming and knew so much, and could make a desirable position for himself. Yet she was glad with a girl's contradictory soul that Gertrude had not consented to an engagement.

Like a flash the delight of the last week went over her, the amusing love-making that always brought rifts of color to Gertie's face, and Uncle Con's enjoyment. O, he *was* happy! They were very much in love and had been before Sherburne's return.

"O, Gertie does love him," she declared with a sudden accession of loyalty and conviction.

"Just as she would love any man of position, and means enough to afford her an elegant home," said Sherburne, with an air of superior wisdom and experience. "She might have taken me if I had been the proud possessor of a fortune."

"But you seem so young! And—somehow, I can't think it of Gertie."

"Princess, you are sweet and innocent and trustful. And I can't bear to have Gertrude Murray wind you round her finger as she will all the others. I suppose, now, mamma went down to her charming manner!"

There was a withering scorn in the young voice capable of sweeping one out of the universe if a voice could do it.

"O Sherburne, I am so sorry for it all!" Her arms were around his neck and she was crying on his shoulder. "I want them to be happy now that they are married, and my heart aches for you, and I don't know what to think. I can't bear to believe ill of Gertie, but if she trifled with you and is deceitful and selfish——"

"Keep your eyes open and you will learn a good many things. I don't expect you to change your mind about Gertrude in a moment, minds that can whiffle about like that, never have solid enduring opinions. But I did want you to know why I shall not go to Grandmamma Murray's feast, nor Uncle James' reception, and why I have no interest in the new house nor what Mrs. Con Murray may choose to do. There dear, do not cry. They are not worth tears."

It was very hard for Princess to meet the household with equanimity, and she admitted that she had a headache.

"Now children," said Auntie Dell, "you are to give Princess a vacation. You have almost worn her out. She is to go to her room and not be disturbed for the next two hours, longer still if she does not get rested."

Princess was glad to retire though there was a chorus of regret in every key. She laid her throbbing head on the pillow and cried again from sheer weariness. The struggle had almost torn her in two. There were too such distinct sides. It did seem as if Gertrude must have encouraged Sherburne, and yet Uncle Con was so confident that he had awakened her regard long before. On the other hand she must have been coquetting for the mere love of amusement, which was more detestable than not really knowing one's mind.

There was another thorn pricking the tender heart of Princess. Did Mr. Sevier, or would he think her capable of such duplicity? Would he consider that she had held out false lights? She had been trying to like him very much, but she knew now that no depth of sincere liking could touch the true foundations of love. That was something finer and more sacred. What if Gertrude—but no, Gertrude was not trying to like Sherburne for any more occult reason.

That Sherburne was altogether mistaken and had allowed himself in his anger and mortification to swerve from the truth did not then occur to her. There was some dreadful misapprehension about it all. She did not want Gertrude proved false and designing, and if she were, she, Princess, would have been the means of bringing a great sorrow upon them all. Did one's generous plans sometimes get sadly travestied?

Sherburne sent regrets to Grandmamma Murray. But the Carews and the Draytons and Nora and Mr. Mallory

were out in force. The happiest woman was Mrs. Murray who firmly believed that she had no wish ungratified. And what a gay party it was! They could not help going over the old times, and Con insisted as he often did, that Dell Sherburne had been his first love, and old Doctor Carew his most powerful rival.

"For you see I might have managed the young doctor," said Con, with a mirthful twinkle, "but at the other end of the line adroit papa Carew was angling for Dell and caught her. It was two against one."

"O Con, dear, how can you?" said his mother, in her soft, deprecating tone, at which the company laughed.

Princess' honesty gave her an aching heart this evening. Gertrude *was* very bright and gay, with a ready answer for every one, chaffing with Mr. Mallory, running tilts with Mr. Drayton, and making herself very attractive. Perhaps not more so than when in Washington, but might not this very readiness lead one to attach a deeper meaning to little things? Gertie had this same quality at Melchias, and she was the life of the yachting party.

She had merely spoken to her at first, and they were quite far apart at the table. They sat a long while over the dessert and coffee, and drank toasts and gave good wishes. Even after they rose it was easy to evade, but just at the last, when they were in mamma Murray's best room putting on their wraps, Gertrude came over to her.

"Princess, don't you want to go out 'ordering' with me to-morrow morning? Con has hurried up the workmen after the fashion of the old woman and her pig, and everybody begins to do. So we are to order carpets, and you must come and choose yours."

Princess raised two troubled eyes, and a flush went up to her brow. "I—" she stammered, "I—" O what could she say? How could she go and choose anything with this great weight of distrust on her soul.

"No, I think I cannot go to-morrow," she cried, hurriedly.

"O, why! Uncle Con is so impatient. He wants everything in readiness, so that he can give what he calls an old-fashioned house-warming. Princess, our lives will be like the end of a century with old outgrown things and customs, and bits of new fashions tacked on to them until we shall mystify our friends as to just where we belong. Do come. Where shall we meet?"

"No, I really cannot," the girl gasped.

"The next day, then?"

"I will send you word." Then she turned away to say good-night to a guest.

When they came to bid her good-night she was sheltered under Aunt Lyndell's wing, and it was very brief.

"Sherburne has taken umbrage at his uncle's marriage," said Aunt Lyndell. "I begin to consider it a very sensible choice. Mr. Murray is young for his years, and his mind is always so fresh and alive with the interests of to-day. And Mrs. Murray fits into her place as if she had been born in it."

"I like her," returned the doctor, "and we shall have to admit that a man's choice of a girl a good deal younger than himself is not often sensible. In this case it is admirable. But I am perplexed about Sherburne. I have made several attempts to explore his mind," and the speaker laughed, "but without satisfactory results. He seems to have lost interest in most things. He misses

lectures, he is irritable, the boys say, and has discarded his enthusiasms. To tell the truth, I do not think he has struck the right thing, but he means to keep at it. Persistency may be commendable in some cases, but I heartily wish he would give up this."

He was thinking of another boy that he had meant to train, and about the bent of whose mind he was quite as much puzzled. He recalled his own eager interest and sighed that one could transfuse so small a degree of it.

Princess went to bed with a half frightened feeling. Like her mother she was fond of having events move smoothly. Violet Osborne had been quite amusing at school with her tiffs and disagreements with other girls. There had been times when Ray was trying, when she kept a hurt sort of silence, but Ray had developed a sweet cordiality that made her a charming friend. Princess could not remember any more serious disputes in her life than childish squabbles like April showers, soon over with. This was likely to be a much more lasting matter. Even if she had the courage to accuse Gertrude of double dealing, that would not mend the matter. She had seen some of the intimacies that "didn't mean anything," but were begun with a very deliberate intention of extorting admiration. And there were other half friendships people dropped into unwittingly, as she had. What if Gertrude had done the same thing and never supposed Sherburne would take it seriously? If it had been any one but Sherburne she could condone it more easily, but she must side with her brother. And she could recall the many nonsensical things Gertrude had said about marriage; amusing of course, but if true, quite heartless.

She had made the merest little call upon Mrs. Kenneth

and promised to go to luncheon. She would take this opportunity lest Gertrude might call for her. She would not even risk Aunt Millicent's delightful informal morning reception that she had counted on, and where people came to talk of the day's events.

Mrs. Kenneth was gratified with her coming.

"I began to think that we would all drop out of your mind," she said, "there were so many new people and events crowding in. What an entertaining winter you have had! Bertram read your letters to us and it was almost like being in the midst of things one's self. And brother enjoyed his little bit of you all with such fervor. I'm beginning to believe largely in environment," and a sweet smile illuminated the face. "I will own now that I was a little disappointed in Eric when we first renewed our relationship. As he had never been crossed in love there was no need of making a middle-aged wisacre out of himself. If some woman hadn't taken him in hand he would have been forty by this time, and in another ten years sixty. The last thing my sweet Margaret said to me was, 'Dear mamma, don't grow only one year older by the time I come back.' And with all of us, we have turned Eric's dial back to the true figure. Still, if he had not been with me I should have removed my easy-chairs and traps to Washington and had a glimpse of you all. Ruth would have enjoyed it."

Ruth had gone to Mrs. Drayton's. She liked the talks and she had felt certain of seeing Princess.

"O, that would have been delightful. I had not meant to stay when I went up. I made so many useful resolves in the autumn after I gave up going to college," and Princess flushed daintily. "I did offer to teach the children, but mamma would not hear to that. Then I

began to learn a little about housekeeping, and it ended by all this gayety. I was going back home when Uncle Con carried me off," and she gave a bright little laugh.

Then they discussed the marriage.

"I didn't suppose Mr. Murray would marry. He is the sort of man who can make a splendid bachelor to the end of his days. But when all you young people married and had homes of your own, he would have found it rather lonely. He has made an excellent choice. I like Gertrude very much."

"O, I am glad you do!" exclaimed Princess, with unaffected sweetness.

"One couldn't spend a year or two with Mrs. Townsend without being well trained for such a position. Then Gertrude has too much pungency to be weakly sentimental, and Mr. Murray would tease the life out of a romantic girl. Not but what I do believe in romance for some people. I don't want it to die out of the world."

Princess drew a sort of relieved breath. If she could have faith in Gertrude once more! Mrs. Kenneth had opportunities of judging her quite correctly, she thought.

They talked of Margaret's home-coming in the autumn.

"She has made all her plans," said the satisfied mother. "Of course she is all I have, and though I had a little misgiving at first about saddling an invalid on her when I had money enough for a separate home, she and Mr. Phillips vetoed the plan at once. I did think I could get along with Ruth, who is almost like a daughter and needs some warm human interest. Her poor, old grandmother will never be any pleasure or duty, even. She wants Ruth's salary to be added to the general fund of savings, and this is the more peculiar when Ruth will have it all in the end. But she doesn't seem to consider

the end may come to her. What a terrible thing a miserly old age is ! ”

Princess gave a little shiver.

“ And the plan is a nice, roomy house. Mr. Drayton is to find that for me in the course of the summer, and I am to purchase it. We are to have three rooms of our very own, and conveniences for meals if we choose to take them alone, as we often shall. Margaret is to keep the house, and be the mistress. I can never be sufficiently thankful for Ruth, although there will come a time when as an heiress she will have no need of me.”

“ That is a lovely plan,” returned Princess. She wondered a little what the professor would do, and almost resented his being counted out.

“ Bertram has enjoyed being here so much,” she continued, with a heightened color.

“ Yes, Eric is very fond of him. He is such a splendid student and will capture a prize next year without doubt.”

“ O how delighted papa will be,” and her eyes lightened with joy.

“ We *do* enjoy him as well. And Sherburne, though he has quite deserted us of late, I was a little afraid he was rather *épris* with Gertrude, and really relieved when the marriage was announced. But young fellows are apt to have two or three such turns before they settle upon a steady fancy.”

A vivid color flushed Princess’ face. It was a consolation to know that other people thought it unwise.

“ Now you must tell me about the girls. Is Violet really doing anything with her genius? And I suppose Pearl is as beautiful as ever ? ”

Princess related some of the most enjoyable events, and

the fascinating glimpses of public life they had seen through her father's influence.

"Do you know that I think Sherburne should be in that kind of life rather than studying medicine. Eric really considers him intended for an orator. What do you suppose gave him the fancy?"

"He became a good deal interested during the last part of his German student life. And then he had always been quite in love with Uncle Carew, and Uncle Underwood, who appears to think some one should be trained to carry on his work. It seems to me we run to physicians;" and Princess gave a soft little laugh. "You can't think what a tremendous enthusiast Uncle Underwood is! Papa declares he is quite enough to infect any one."

Ruth came in presently, her face in a glow.

"O Princess," she exclaimed, after the first greeting, "you should have been at Mrs. Drayton's. There was a musical morning with a lovely young Russian woman, who sang exquisitely and made a little address. The talks were so delightful, not over any one's head. And just at the last, Mrs. Murray came in. I think she was disappointed at not finding you there."

Princess' heart gave a sudden, violent beat.

Then they had a cozy luncheon and talked over the plans again.

"You see we are leaving Eric quite out," said Mrs. Kenneth. "I am sorry to do it, but he does want a place to himself, and I can't saddle Margaret with everybody. But he has grown much more socially inclined. He and Bertram might set up bachelor lodgings."

"And you would have to come and keep house for them, Princess," said Ruth, with curious inadvertence,

which she did not remark herself. "Your uncle has found a housekeeper."

She was busy just then dishing some pudding and frosting it over with whipped cream. Princess' face had been drenched in scarlet, and Mrs. Kenneth pretended to hunt for her handkerchief, to give her time to recover herself.

"Yes, I have lost my position," Princess subjoined, with all the merriment she could put into her voice, though her hostess detected the tremble. "Mrs. Kenneth, do you think I have grounds for a breach of promise? I can substantiate my claim in black and white."

"It depends upon whether you want to be held to *your* bargain. If the damage involved was considerable, he might keep you to your part of the agreement."

"And I guess I don't quite want to be kept."

While Mrs. Kenneth took her rest afterward, Ruth and Princess had a girl's talk. There were so many subjects that had come up in letters. Ruth was very happy about the new plans, and reaching out into the future without any thought of what had troubled Princess. She referred to the professor quite often, too, re-echoing Mrs. Kenneth's pride in him. It was just as one might talk about a brother.

Princess was strangely confused, and some inexplicable power seemed to keep her pulses athrob with the troublesome rush of color flying from cheek to brow since she could not help seeing distinctly before her his look at the night of the lecture. She could plead ignorance no longer; she was aware of its significance, and she was frightened at standing on the threshold of a great mystery.

They would fain have kept her to dinner, but she would

not stay. Mrs. Kenneth's manner was so tenderly caressing that even this gave her a vague, delicious uneasiness.

Mr. Murray had been out of the city on business most of the day. He had taken Gertrude to his bachelor rooms until the house could be made ready. He was late, and dinner was announced at once as he declared himself famished. Then he laid down some slips of paper and took out a blue pencil, which indicated pressing business.

"Did you look at carpets to-day?"

"Yes," Gertrude replied, briefly. She knew the question was asked more from politeness than interest, and she had learned already not to feel jealous of paper and pencil.

"Is the stained glass window in?" presently.

"Yes, and it is beautiful."

The papers were finished and sent away when the dessert came in. Then they had a little talk. When he went over to his easy-chair he lighted a cigar and stretched himself out. He had hardly imagined a woman with rights everywhere, could be so comfortable to get along with in rather crowded bachelor-quarters. She was so deft, too. He watched her as she put the cloth on the table, stood the drop light in the centre, laid papers and magazines to one's very hand.

"Shall I light it?" she asked.

"No—not yet. Come here and talk. Let us consider household ways and be wise—or extravagant as the mood overtakes us. Did you have a good time with Princess? What did she say?"

"I did not have Princess."

"Why, I thought ——"

"She was not quite sure, at least she did not promise."

"O, will you go to-morrow? Bring her in to dinner. Or perhaps I can join you, and we will all air our opinions. And if there is a nice play we can go in the evening."

Gertrude was considering. She felt certain something had happened to disturb Princess.

"Well, what conspiracy are you hatching?"

She had been leaning on the corner of the chair and he moved so that he could see her face. She felt a rising color and tried to laugh.

"Suppose I should not see Princess to-morrow? There are so many relatives with claims."

"I will tell you where you could have found her—at Mrs. Drayton's. The talk and the music was very fine, our reporter said, and the woman extremely handsome. I wish you had dropped in there."

"I did," she returned, after a pause.

"Why—that is queer, too. I thought you were the best of friends and all was serene. What has gone wrong?"

"I am not quite sure anything has. But if I shouldn't see her to-morrow I shall have a misgiving ——"

"O, you do not suppose that idiotic boy has confided his grievance to her? And now I come to think of it I scarcely saw her last evening. I didn't suppose Sherburne would come, but if he is going to stir up a family feud he will find he has me to settle with, and I shall stand no nonsense."

"Con, dear," she leaned over and kissed him on the forehead. How like his mother's voice that sounded, his mother who had been gentle and a peacemaker all her life— "Con, dear, do not be hasty about anything. I should be sorry if my coming in the family led to any trouble or disagreement."

"But it has not. I am sure the Amorys and all of them were most cordial. The judge admired you, and Tessy gave you a sister's welcome. Princess had gotten over all that little feeling, in fact I think she would have been very much affronted if you had not listened to my suit. Indeed"—he leaned his head back and laughed heartily—"I can just imagine the consternation if you *had* been foolish enough to consent to that young man's wishes."

She laughed too, but not very cordially.

"After all," reflectively, "it would have been a temptation to some girls. He is a handsome and attractive fellow. I will grant that even if his present prospects are not brilliant. And you *are* young, you know."

"I wonder if you will ever come to think it was the prospect that tempted me?"

"I wonder if you will ever come to be sorry that you have married a man so much older? There ought to be something to equalize it."

"That isn't answering my question."

"I have the self-appreciation of my sex. I think you fell in love with me. But there was no fascinating young rival. And I should have insisted upon your marrying me out of hand that night on the boat when we rather stumbled over each other's preferences, if I had not possessed a little grain of conscience about the disparity. If you had been a shrewd young woman of the world you would have captured me then and there."

"Do you suppose I would have done such a thing?" she exclaimed, spiritedly.

"You didn't, evidently. And if I had not known about your future I should have followed with the vim and perseverance of twenty."

"How thoughtful you were for me," she said, with deep feeling.

"And Mrs. Townsend insisted that I should give you still another chance. Yes, I think I was generous. But if I had seen any real danger ——"

"It was hardly fair, after all," she said, with a glint of mirth. "You never allowed me to quite know whether you loved me or not, and you thought I ——"

"You are not a shrewd hand at guessing." He laughed softly as he kissed her. "Well, I have distanced the young fellows, and that ought to satisfy me. And I dare say I shall get all the love I deserve and more, too. But I am not going to have Princess tolled away—that southern word just expresses it—by any angry young man appealing to her sympathy, even if he is her brother."

"Princess would have a right to be angry if she thought I had lured him on. I never did, consciously." She half buried her face against his. "I never even dared indulge in a good flirtation—you seemed so—watchful isn't quite the word ——"

"I am glad you felt the mysterious power. The flirtation would have been nipped in the bud."

"We will wait over to-morrow, at least," she said, after a long, tender silence. "But it does hurt me to have Princess distrust me."

"To-morrow will be about as far as my patience can carry me. Then I shall step in and put an end to the young man's folly."

"I hoped it would die naturally."

Sherburne took his sister out that evening to a high-class concert, and, though he said little, he deepened the impression that he had been very ill-used. And she, sweet soul, was ready to take up arms against her friend. She

seemed suddenly aware of the depth and heights possible to love, and the pang of falsity, of deception. But afterward Gertrude's perfidy swept over her, and with a sigh she wondered how they could ever be dear friends again.

But what made the atmosphere so radiant that, in spite of her sorrow and regret at this, she was lifted above it. A new vivifying light penetrated her brain and filled it to overflowing with tenderness for all sorrow and suffering and disappointment. There was a fresh, exquisite meaning to all things, a new creation, as if the old things that had lain cloudily about her were swept away and she had just begun to live.

What mystery was it that so encompassed her? There was a curious sanctity to it before which she trembled and drew long quivering breaths. She dared not enter the holy of holies, but was quite content to sit outside until one hand raised the veil and invited her within. But she shut her eyes and would not even imagine whose hand it might be, while she could see clearly whose hand it was not. And she gave inward thanks that she had not been betrayed by any wandering sympathy.

O, what would a woman do if, too late, a consciousness of what love truly was, came to her and found her a prisoner of honor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LIGHT THAT ILLUMINES.

PRINCESS said to herself that she could not see Gertrude at present, unless she came to call. She would not even go to Aunt Millicent's. There was enough to entertain her after the children went to school. Aunt Neale, grandmamma, as the flock of Carews called her, kept a good deal to her own room and that of her brother. She was quite feeble now, and her complexion had a peculiar transparency that matched the silvery whiteness of her hair.

Aunt Lyndell was still full of philanthropical plans, but now she never allowed them to interfere with true family life. There were two hours of the morning devoted to letters, applications and callers. Doctor Carew said she ran an employment bureau. But she had learned the truest charity was fitting people for work and finding places for them.

Princess wrote several letters for her, and she laughingly proposed the young girl should remain all the spring as private secretary, "for," said she, "I have almost coveted Miss Maurice, and now I can condole with Mrs. Townsend."

"Auntie Dell," the girl asked, hesitatingly, "do you think they are—that Uncle Con is very happy?"

"If he is unhappy it will be because he has lost the art of making himself happy. And—but you and Gertrude have been such friends, and you saw a good deal of them

in Washington. You ought to be able to answer your own question."

"I think they are very happy, now," with a grave little emphasis.

"And a good deal of the rest depends upon Gertrude's wisdom and tenderness. Men are capable of absorbing a great deal of real love, as well as a good deal of silliness. I think we women are apt to forget that love is the golden key, when we stand outside in some hurt mood and nurse imaginary wrongs. It seems to me Gertrude is of the franker sort. And Uncle Con is no longer an enthusiastic young man. I was a little amazed at first, for I had a feeling that he would not be likely to marry. But the honeymoon is just the beginning, the marriage is the true life and there has to be years of it before one can pronounce it good or bad."

Then some girls came in, and Princess went to Aunt Neale's room. She was very fond of reminiscences about Sherburne House.

It was almost noon when the waitress came up with a card for Miss Beaumanoir. A scarlet bloom went up to her brow, but Aunt Neale was too intent on her own thoughts to remark it.

She must go down alone. In her inmost heart she knew she would rather meet him alone, trying as it would be, though she was armed with a secret knowledge that she would not allow to take shape even in her soul. There was a faint thrill like terror as well.

She hesitated a moment beside the silken portière that swept the floor. Did the watchful ear of love detect the slight footfall? Professor Kenneth came forward and saw the downcast face struggling for courage that one did not need for a mere acquaintance. Then he gathered

the slight figure in his arms, and the most serious, the most exquisite question of life was asked and answered without a word. Was it moments or half a lifetime before either spoke?

"Last summer, nearly a year ago, I confessed my regard to your mother, and she interposed no real objection. But I had loved you before that, during that delightful summer. How one chooses is always a mystery. I said then if I were not so much older and graver I would enter the lists. But it was hardly fair. I wanted you to see more of the world, to know whether you would be likely to choose me as I chose you."

"And mamma knew all this time ——"

He felt the added warmth of her cheek, but there was only a softness of relief in her tone. If mamma knew there could be no question. And now a hundred little glimpses flashed over her that she never dreamed had any real meaning.

"And at Christmas," he continued, "I almost concluded that I should not be the fortunate one to awake the regard you were capable of giving. Princess, did you evade me, or was it my fancy?"

"I thought—I was afraid——" tremulously ——

"You were right to consider. We do not look at the sacred side of love enough, nor the significance of a sure preference. And this was why I waited. You were so young, you had a right to see something of the world, and a man would have been selfish to the last degree to have shut you out of this experience."

"It was not altogether that." She wanted to be quite frank with him. "O, there was Ruth, and you could not help seeing her sweetness, her readiness to give of her best ——"

"But I loved you," he said, simply. "I should have loved you always, and waited, and if the chance never came I would rather have had a sacred temple in my life with a vision, than the real presence of any other woman."

"Do you love me like that?" It seemed marvellous to her, the choicest gift of a lifetime.

"I do not think I was formed for a general lover," and she could feel the half smile in his voice. "My inner life was extremely solitary until Margaret and her mother came into it. I have no fashion of saying pretty society things. You must train me."

"And Mrs. Kenneth knew?"

"She divined. And she would not let me lose heart, though, as I said, I should have gone on hoping until your regard was placed elsewhere. And suddenly I came to understand. Yet I wonder, dear, if it will not be a grave life for you? I shall try to put in it all the joy, all the pleasure that youth can take."

"But I like the other things also. Life would grow tiresome to me if I had to dance through it."

"Yet I like to look on at the dancing and the good cheer of youth. It is only now and then that youth drops out of life during the early period, as it did out of mine. It would not have happened if I had been in a family. Poky old scholar as I am, I have more of a longing for family life than many who have only to reach out their hand to have."

She would be satisfied. She knew now she should desire to be in a wider life than her mother's. She wanted to be in touch with some of the greater qualities and successes, the more intellectual manifestations of science and philosophy and advancement of the world. No one had

quite comprehended this side of her nature, and to be understood thrilled her.

He was considering another point in a man's way.

"And you would have given me up to Ruth," he said, in a reluctant, regretting tone.

"If you loved her ——"

A soft little smile made a sunrise in the eyes and lingered about the lips. She knew now this could not have been, and she would have proved more than human if she had not experienced a leaping pulse of gladness.

Presently he said, "I was charged with a message. Mrs. Kenneth desired me to ask you to dinner, insisted that you *must* come. We will not even have Bertram. And to-morrow I will explain to your father. I have never thought much about money, indeed am afraid I have been rather heedless with it, but I am glad to have something to offer you beside my salary, not that one would need to starve on that."

He hated to leave her, but he would not stop to luncheon. He was a very earnest lover, after all. The strange, sweet knowledge that he alone of all the world had the power and privilege of making this girl happy, gave him an exquisite sense of responsibility and delight.

As Princess was going through the hall, she espied the pile of letters. Two for her—one from Ray, one from papa. She broke the seal of that first and ran her eye along the lines. There was some solicitude about Sherburne, and then a message for her very self and some fatherly counsel.

Mr. Sevier had begged the privilege of addressing her on the tender and grave subject of marriage.

"The young man is unexceptionable in every way and

has none of the society vices of the present day," her father wrote. "Then I think he has it in him to come up to some higher position and take a hand in public life. If you care for him, Princess, or think you can in time to come, you have my most cordial assent, and I know your mother will agree in whatever is for your happiness."

Princess' pulses gave such a throb that her slight figure shook tremulously. Would she have had the courage to stand up boldly for love's sake, an unknown love, one that might be forever in her soul and find no answering sympathy?

It was like a miracle, as love always is to youth. It was as if she could see the finger of a diviner power. This that had come to her was the best love of her soul, and any other would have missed the perfect, mysterious joy.

"But I should have been brave enough to say no under any circumstances," she thought, "or I would not be worthy of this perfect blessing." Yet she had liked Mr. Sevier very much, and her father approved of him in every way. He was more to a girl's fancy. But she wanted something more purposeful, something with a higher reach than mere material pleasure. There would always be a depth in her soul that Mr. Sevier would not care to fathom, since he would only go far enough to content himself.

Of course papa would have a little twinge of disappointment. He was desirous of the world's approval, he had a good deal of ambition, and Sherburne was not in a fair way to gratify it. She sighed a little. Was happiness for one purchased with sorrow for another?

Aunt Lyndell was much occupied with some cases she wished to lay before her husband. No one remarked

the exquisite joy in the young girl's face, the first glow of the sweet consciousness that she holds the happiness of another in her hands, and that her power can evoke joy or tears. She wanted to tell Aunt Neale, but she must write first of all to her mother.

How much she had to say! Then she put on her coat and hat—she must make one little call upon Aunt Milly, who was wondering where she kept herself, since she had seen so little of her. And Nora was complaining.

"But there are so many," she said in her naïve pretty way. "Aunt Milly, I ought to be twins."

"And then we wouldn't be able to decide which one we liked the best," returned Aunt Milly, smilingly.

She longed yet dreaded to see Mrs. Kenneth. And she wished, somehow, that Ruth might not be in.

She had her wish. Mrs. Kenneth was alone.

"You dear little midget, where have you been loitering all the afternoon? Ruth went out an hour ago. How delightful it is that everybody talks about everything from a voyage to the North Pole to the interior of Africa! You do not have to race through volumes to find a few facts. There they are, concise, labeled, ready to stow away in your memory. Ruth is much interested and when I said you were coming, wondered, dear soul, if I could spare her for a while, and if you would not feel hurt! So I sent her off and have been counting the moments. O, my dear, dear child!"

Mrs. Kenneth held her to her heart in a long, tender embrace.

"Princess, you are quite sure you have not made any mistake?" she inquired, softly.

"I should *feel* that," was the half breathless answer.

"It is a new world of joy to me, and I am glad, yes, truly glad," with a delicious little laugh, "to be invited in."

"There have been some misgivings on Eric's part. I wish he was five and twenty, that would be quite old enough for you, but he did not have as good a position at that period; and, really, I think he is younger in heart now than he was then. Your mother knows, so I do not feel worried. Eric came home from Washington in such high feather, and yet he had not said a word to you, except perhaps in love's mysterious language."

Princess blushed to her utmost capacity which was great.

"It seems very odd, doesn't it to you? What chances there are in the world! Just the way we all met on the boat, and then that Eric should go off exploring that little Maine island because some one had told him about many curious specimens not to be had elsewhere. O my child, I hope you may be very happy, and be spared to each other many a year."

The earnest, tender voice touched the young girl. Yes—years and years—oh, how could one endure to be separated!

She took off her wrap and brought a low rocker close up to the reclining chair. Of course they talked of Eric, there was no subject so absorbing to either of them just then. And before they had said half the delightful things, and it is strange how many virtues love can find, the door of the private hall opened, and a girl's clear voice with a soft, happy ring in it sounded. A graver, deeper voice replied.

"Are you sitting here in the dark? Has Princess come?"

Princess wanted to see Ruth Ensign's face. Ah, what if the story should give her a pang?

"Let me," said the professor, taking the lighted match from her hand. The face was bright and eager and Ruth turned to her friend and kissed her with joyousness.

"I met the professor and have been entertaining him with the deep and mysterious aspects of our talk this afternoon that goes far to invalidate the stone age and the different ages, since nations are found in different places in all these ages. One scientist comes to hand and upsets another. I don't know whether the nail is driven out, or only a little further in."

She laughed again merrily as she lighted the piano lamp with its soft pink shade, looked if the heat was right and then went out to the kitchen department to stir up the handmaid. The table was already arranged except the few touches the young mistress always gave. And then she made the coffee—she had some especial art, and Mrs. Kenneth came out on her brother's arm, and they took their places.

Ruth wondered a little what kept the color coming and going in Princess' face. And was there a rare, unusual sound in her voice, a mysterious depth? It made her prettier than usual. But the professor seemed interested in drawing the main fact of the "talk" out of Ruth, since it had been given by one of the new scientific women who was being discussed as the future president of a college.

Afterward Princess played and sang and charmed them all. Then Eric Kenneth put on her wraps rather awkwardly, but with a curiously delicate touch and took her back to Doctor Carew's.

Ruth went to look at the fire in the study, returned

and put out the lamps, leaving the gas to shine through the ground globe. All this time a curious thought was floating about her mind. Was she glad? Could she wish it otherwise?

"If it is so she will be very happy," Ruth said, under her breath.

There was no envying or jealousy. If such a thing had come to her *she* would be very happy. Perhaps no girl ever looked on another's joy without the secret hope that it might some day thrill her with rapture. But hers would come from some one quite different. She had her ideal and was in no hurry. Life was delightful to her at present.

She sat down by Mrs. Kenneth and was very quiet.

"What are you thinking about?" Mrs. Kenneth asked, presently.

"About them," she answered, with a slight inclination of the head. "Princess has always liked him so much. And it came in my mind that he was almost or quite in love with her."

"Quite;" with a gratified intonation.

"O, that is delightful! Princess is such a darling. And she will have to live in the city—afterward."

"Yes, the others' loss will be our gain."

"I was wondering how you could plan so calmly to give him up when Mrs. Phillips came home."

"O, I thought I couldn't put any more burthens on Margaret."

Then they lapsed into silence.

Princess said good-night to her lover and was flying upstairs when Bertram caught her.

"Did you go out?" he asked. "I wanted to come to dinner, but the professor said—well, I can't remember,

only he put me off, and he seldom does, you know. It's like another home around there, and I am always welcome. Then I heard you had gone, and it seemed queer."

"Bert, have you taken out a mortgage on the professor?" she asked, laughingly, glad he could not see her scarlet cheeks.

"Princess!" called Aunt Lyndell.

Princess paused in the doorway of Auntie Dell's study and library. The children often spent their evenings here, but now she was alone.

"Princess dear—did you have a pleasant time? Uncle Con has been here. I think I ought to tell you—he and Sherburne had a—quarrel—quite a desperate one I fancy. Do you know anything they could quarrel about?"

Princess turned pale, then red, and looked extremely troubled, but was silent.

"Was it anything about Gertrude Maurice?"

"Yes," answered Princess, faintly.

"I've been putting several little things together and the sum total seemed Mrs. Murray. Sherburne used to be at Mrs. Townsend's a good deal, but I never thought of such a thing. There were so many people, young men and old men. And Miss Maurice, as she was then, seemed a very sensible sort of girl who was not likely to take to a young fellow 'with all the world before him where to choose.' And Uncle Con was nearly always there."

Princess was very much embarrassed. It did not seem to her either of her two lovers had had very much encouragement, yet they had both resolved upon a proposal. Was Gertrude altogether at fault?

“Sherburne hasn’t been going on at all well, latterly. Uncle Carew is quite discouraged with him. And Bertram is a splendid boy, and student. Uncle is puzzled to know what to do about it. Your father could command him to return, but that is such a peremptory step. And uncle hates to find fault. But I wish he had been at home to-night. Uncle Con went away without seeing any one, but he left word that you were to come around to-morrow morning and stay to luncheon. Then Sherburne went out and has not come in yet. He stays out too late.”

Princess had been considering. “Yes, Auntie Dell, there was some trouble. Sherburne thought himself ill-used.”

“Well—I think we would all have considered it a very bad move on Gertrude’s part to entertain a thought of Sherburne as a candidate for her hand, or to consent to a long and uncertain engagement. And it seems that it was no sudden move on Uncle Con’s side.”

“No,” answered Princess, in an assured tone.

“I dare say you were in his confidence.” There was a smiling brightness in Aunt Lyndell’s eyes. “And I think it an excellent match. Beside, Princess, Uncle Con isn’t the sort of man to stand any poaching on his preserve, so unless Gertrude was very deceitful, I think there couldn’t have been much flirting between them. I am sorry enough, but Sherburne ought to have more sense, and when Gertrude married there was an end of it. But I notice he has been gloomy and cynical and cross. My dear child, I think you had better write to your mother. She has such good sense and judgment and patience. Or perhaps it would be best to wait and hear Uncle Con’s version. Dear, what a shame to bother

you, but I did not have uncle to confer with, and he will come in dead tired from a medical meeting. You look tired, too. Kiss me and run to bed."

Her secret was too sacred to be brought out after this. The consciousness of some one caring for her who would take up any burthen of hers quite as if it was his own, comforted her greatly. She was beginning to understand that the mysterious sympathy was deeper, or that it went farther into one's life than that of parents even. O, was that ungrateful?

She could not be wholly unhappy. In a half dream she floated out upon that rosy sea, where love held the tiller and the current defying any analysis, drifted her through narrows and out to sunny breadths, past shaded nooks and islands fragrant with bloom, on and on to the enchanted land where youth is glorified.

Sherburne was sullen and silent the next morning, and hurried out before Princess could have a word with him. She dreaded to meet Gertrude, but she knew it was best. Aunt Millicent came in and asked her to drive and also to look at a fine collection of paintings at the art galleries. She was very glad to defer her evil hour as long as possible, but it had to come at length. Aunt Milly put her down at her uncle's.

"I am so glad you have come," Gertrude began, holding her hand, but not offering her the cordial kiss trembling on her lips, for Princess looked so serious and dignified. "And if I have done anything to trouble or annoy you, Princess, I am truly sorry. I *do* regret last evening. Con went around to see you and he stumbled over Sherburne, whom he had not met since our marriage. Sherburne said something that offended him, and though he seems so easy and jolly, he has quite a hot

temper on occasions," smiling a little. "And so they had rather high words. Sherburne has told you the story as he looks at it. I wish you would let me tell mine."

She had been removing Princess' wraps and now seated her in an easy-chair. There was such a frank cordiality in her manner, that the young girl's prejudices seemed swept away in spite of the obstacles and protections she summoned back hastily. For somehow Gertrude looked charming this morning, softened, entreating, but Princess remembered it was her brother and resolved not to yield too easily, and to judge fairly.

"Yes," in a tone of gracious permission, rather than cordial assent.

Gertrude's temper flared up a bit and flushed her cheek. But she had resolved her patience should make amends for Con's hastiness.

"I am going to begin way back in the first of all," she said, with a little tremble in her voice, but smiling over it and crowding it down. "Princess, if I had let myself I should have fallen desperately in love with your uncle that summer at Melchias. And I know now that he took a warm interest in me. Young as I was it influenced me in this way—I began to measure other men by him and contrast them with what he said and did. And I honestly believe if he had not asked me to marry him I should have gone on with Mrs. Townsend for years. When I did not see him I could put him out of my mind, but when he came ——"

Gertrude smiled and flushed. Princess flushed a little as well. She, too, had been trying to put some one out of her mind, and there was a secret sympathy.

Then she began with the first day she had met Sherburne, and told the little story straightforwardly.

“ You see it would have been folly to listen to such a thing, and when I was really in love with some one else. Of course if I had been ambitious on certain lines, or susceptible to youth and a handsome face ! Young men do take freaks of unreasonable adoration, and recover from it. And it is foolish to go on caring when it is so utterly hopeless. I wonder if that isn’t obstinacy as well as preference? ”

Princess gave a long sigh.

“ You see I had no idea of any special earnestness on his part, except the indulgence of a youthful fancy. If I could have listened and consented to an engagement, I do honestly believe that Sherburne would have found it irksome and been first to tire of it. And I know all your family would have considered it extremely unwise.”

Yes, Princess understood that. Sherburne had exaggerated some points, but when Gertrude became engaged to Uncle Con he should have given her up in a manly fashion and not accused her of mercenary motives. For Princess had become suddenly wise, and she knew by the lights and depths and tenderness in her friend’s eyes at the mention of Uncle Con’s name, where her true interest had always lain.

“ And we both supposed the marriage would end Sherburne’s unfortunate fancy, but it seems not to. I do not want it to go on and make trouble. And Sherburne has no right to allow it to distract his attention from other matters that are important to his coming life. When he gets over it he will wonder at his foolishness.”

Princess looked up with large, soft, wistful eyes. Was there anything else to be said ?

Gertrude threw herself on a hassock and leaned against the girl’s knee, taking both small hands in hers.

“And, Princess, you may never know how rare and difficult it is to keep the golden mean of acquaintance-ship when it is your business to be agreeable to everybody, and when you have a secret longing to be liked, perhaps a little more than liked. You have had so much love in your life there have never been dry, hungry places hard to get over as desert sands. I’ve always envied you, and one thing made Con more precious to me—the large circle of family relations, the intelligent and charming people, whose esteem I hope to gain and keep. And if in the beginning I did little gracious things that look like flirtation, I am very sorry. But I told him frankly, decisively, before your uncle spoke, that I could not marry him, and since then I certainly have not been to blame.”

Gertrude’s eyes were dewy almost to tears, and Princess’ impulse of tenderness went out to her. For had not she known something of this? Had she not tried to do more than like Mr. Sevier? What if in the end he should accuse her of flirting? He could not in reason accuse her of being mercenary.

“That is almost a smile, Princess. What does it mean? And this mysterious elusive sweetness ——”

Princess buried her face on Gertrude’s shoulder.

“Perhaps I know more about love, and that difficult golden mean than you think,” she replied, with a whispered tremulousness. “And you can understand ——”

She was glad she had written to her mother. Of course some of the elders ought to have been told, and Ruth was more her chosen friend than Gertrude, but this inexplicable touch of the sweetest of all knowledge made them friends as they had never been before, and for all time.

"And it's queer," declared Gertrude, laughing through her tears, "that you haven't given your heart to a gay young fellow to go dancing down the next half dozen years. But after all, youth is such a gay, glad time, and there is but one youth.

"I thought it would be a case of propinquity," Gertrude continued, after a pause. "Do you know that Ruth Ensign is a very charming home girl? She can always see the most delightful thing to be done, she loves to minister to people; she has so many sweet, dainty ways. She makes goodness lovable, and a great many people think it ought to stand on its own foundation quite alone as mere goodness. But you had written your name on his heart before that. Melchias has a great deal to answer for. When we all get old we ought to go up there and have an experience meeting."

Uncle Con was delighted when he came home and found the two women the best of friends. He looked a trifle grave over Princess' engagement—he had counted on some years of girl life for her. As for himself, he admired the professor extremely, and he would certainly attain eminence in his calling.

He had been really angry the evening before with Sherburne's persistence and wrong way of looking at matters. If in his secret heart he thought Gertrude *had* sometimes been unduly attractive, he was also confident the prospect had never for a moment tempted her with its youth and glamour.

"There is nothing but to wait and let him come to his senses," he said.

CHAPTER XIX.

FROM YOUTH TO MANHOOD.

PRINCESS was curiously, unreasonably happy she said to herself. Sherburne angrily accused her of going over to the enemy hand and foot, and in a tragic tone declared she would some day realize the cheat and deception, and the utter selfishness of the whole world.

But there were two very busy days when she and Gertrude went over the new house and discussed furniture and haunted stores, while Uncle Con laughed at the uncertainty of women's minds, and yet spent every spare moment that he could with them. The professor haunted them also. He was a rather shy and delicate lover, but the exquisite friendliness was more to Princess' liking until the matter was really settled.

And then came mamma's letter. Of course she could not plead surprise, and there was a tender sympathy in every line. So long as Princess was quite sure—but it would be well not to decide too hastily. Papa had nearly set his heart upon Mr. Sevier.

There was a little halt in the letter, which was interrupted by a call and luncheon, and the children going out to a birthday feast. Papa had come home quite ill and they had sent for Doctor Underwood.

A few lines were added in the morning. The case was pneumonia and a serious one. Would she return home at once? The boys would be telegraphed to later on.

Doctor Carew was much moved, and was fain to send Sherburne with her.

"You see they do not want either of us," he said, in a coldly indifferent tone persuading himself that he felt really hurt at the word.

But the next day not only were the boys summoned but Doctor Carew entreated to accompany them.

"It must be critical," declared Lyndell. "But Doctor Underwood is so full of resources and keeps up to the high mark in his profession. Still, Tessy will feel better satisfied if you are there."

He knew how critical the case was from another message that he had not mentioned. And all these hours must elapse before he could be of any assistance, if indeed assistance were needed then.

Bertram was shocked at first and could not keep the tears from his eyes. He glanced over the paper but everything blurred, he looked out on the dreary March landscape as it whirled by and it seemed to express desolation rather than the coming of spring. After awhile he turned to his books, he had counted on passing away the tedium with study, but he could only think of Sherburne House and the anxious, sorrowing household, his dear mother! Of course, papa could not die. He had never known him in any state but robust health. Yet there would be days when no one would know except each in his secret heart.

Doctor Carew found a friend on the train and they fell into a discussion. Sherburne sat gloomily, his thoughts a curious chaos. Not any more than Bertram would he believe death possible, but an awful fear tugged at his heart. He went out to the smoking car, but the cigar had no flavor, and the men were laughing at some rough

stories. The air was stifling. So he returned and picked up the paper. If one could only get along without thinking! But it was better even to see the stricken household with that far sight, than it was to live over the last two months and his woes.

The journey seemed endless, but few things really are in this world. Doctor Carew had tried to lighten the burthen for both boys, but only Bertram had responded. More than once he had stolen a glance at Sherburne's handsome, gloomy face, and thought of his own disappointment in the lad. Could he have made the path more attractive for youthful feet? He had a feeling that he had not done his cordial best, because he had not quite approved.

Yet he did feel thankful Sherburne had not plunged into dissipation. He would be saved the mortifying consciousness of not having been able to cope with that viciousness. And perhaps a shock like this would rouse the latent manhood in him.

They reached Sherburne House just at the edge of the evening. Tessy came to meet them in the spacious hall. She put out her hand to Doctor Carew, then went to the strong arms of her firstborn son, and in an instant seemed to live over the first absorbing year of her happy married life, crowned indeed by his coming.

How small and sweet, and exhausted she was! What if all the rest of her life he was to be her protector and try to fill a vacant place that after all never could be filled. A solemn impression of responsibility seemed to overwhelm him. No one had spoken. Doctor Carew, so used to the house, had hurried up to the sick chamber. What if——

“O mamma, mamma!” cried Bertram, crowding in

and kissing the wet face in a passion of sorrow, "God *will* be good to us! It has been in my heart every moment of the journey from Washington, and isn't that strong desire prayer? I know he will hear and answer."

"How is he?" asked Sherburne, huskily.

"He has been unconscious since noon."

To Tessy Beaumanoir the bitterness of death had already passed. When she had looked upon the white, still face, the half-closed eyes, and kissed down on the damp cool brow she felt it was the last farewell. She had not dared to plead for a word. Doctor Underwood had said ——

"You may come in a moment if you will not speak or utter the slightest sound."

Then she had gone out again and tried to comfort the household.

"You have had no supper." Then she put an arm about each of her boys, both so much taller than she, and they walked through to the dining-room. But no one could eat. Sherburne drank a cup of tea. Princess came in and afterward they adjourned to the sitting-room, where the other children were huddled together, waiting in breathless awe.

Tessy Beaumanoir knew she has been blessed among women. All these years no evil had come nigh her. There had been few illnesses, not at all alarming, there had been prosperity, satisfaction, happiness and worldly advancement. Yesterday she had wept and prayed, and said she could not yield up this best love of her life upon God's altar. But to-day she knew it all belonged to God, husband, children, prosperity, happiness. Whatever He sent she must accept. She would suffer in the sorrow,

had not even He wept over his friend's grave, but it would not be as those without hope.

They did not try to talk after the first few questions Princess asked. Doctor Carew came down for some supper and took their mother out with him. Years ago, he remembered he had fought for the young life, and reason with it as well.

Tessy looked her wordless question.

"No one can tell," he answered. "There is nothing I can do or suggest, yet I am glad you sent for me. Dr. Underwood has been splendid."

"They were not so alarmed at first. I think if he had come home at once—but we cannot distrust God's wisdom. And when they thought there would be a turn for the better, it was worse instead. Everybody has been full of kindness and solicitude."

"Now there is only waiting. There comes a time when the issues of life and death rest alone with God. My great hope is in Leonard's splendid constitution. If he should go through the night, the test of that will come afterward."

Then he returned to the patient. There was no change.

"You will remain?" he inquired of Doctor Underwood.

"O yes. I have had some one with me the last two nights. Somehow I can't give him up."

After awhile the children kissed their mother good-night and went to bed. Bertram was both tired and sleepy.

"Will you not go as well?" she asked of Sherburne.

"No. I couldn't sleep. Let me stay with you," and the voice was beseeching.

“Then we will go upstairs.”

Sherburne followed his mother to the room adjoining that in which his father lay. The door was closed. There was a cheerful fire upon the wide hearth and a lounge with a slumber robe thrown carelessly over it.

“You had better lie down,” he said, softly. “You look exhausted.”

She suffered herself to be placed comfortably and covered. Then he drew his chair up beside her.

“Thank you,” she said, softly. “We cannot talk lest we disturb them. But there will be time enough for that.”

She was so white and wan that his heart was moved immeasurably.

In his father's young life there had been two years of invalidism from an accident, and everybody had joined in attention and caresses until he had felt as if the world was really made for his enjoyment. And though this luxury of indulgence had not been Sherburne's, nothing had been demanded from him. His two years abroad had been quite self-indulgent, and he had enjoyed no little admiration. To consider another's comfort would be an acquired rather than inherited virtue. Not that he was more selfish than hundreds of young people to whom fate has been kindly.

But as he sat here now his heart warmed strangely to his mother. If any one had suggested that he did not truly love her, he would have been angry enough to knock him down. And yet—what was love but readiness to do another's pleasure, not simply the pleasure of one bright attractive woman with whom one might come to read a page of romance, but a finer, deeper devotion to all the claims of life. And if sorrow should constitute

him the head of the house—which, God forbid, duty alone would not suffice. He knew then it would take a great deal of love and self-denial to comfort the sorrowing ones. They had a right to demand it of him.

He was amazed at himself. His nature seemed an unknown territory, and he hardly knew what was planted there, even if he had done it largely himself. For the first time he did not feel elated, rather humiliated, instead.

Now and then a step of the servants went up and down. Once something was needed in the other chamber, then that awesome silence again, the dreary midnight silence.

Bertram Carew entered and went over to Tessy who half rose, and turned entreating eyes to him.

"He holds his own," he said, softly, but it seemed as if there was hope in his voice.

"But he has not ——"

"I doubt if there will be a return to consciousness until all is decided. Are you comfortable? Sherburne, you look weary."

"O, you ought to go to bed," said his mother.

"I want to stay here."

The tone was low, but decisive. And Doctor Carew was glad of the decision.

Tessy did doze now and then a brief moment. Sherburne fixed the fire and gazed dreamily at the thin blue flames turning to red and glaring gold.

Twice more before dawn the same not uncheering news came in. Sherburne rose stiff and numb and walked to the window. The sky was overcast, the east thick with clouds and the wind moaned through the great trees. He felt strangely depressed.

It grew lighter, and the servants began to stir about. One of the young lads brought up a great basketful of wood.

"Softly," Sherburne said, with a warning finger.

Tessy rose and came to embrace her son, who kissed her with a new tenderness.

"There must be hope," he began in his young exultant voice that cheered her inexpressibly.

Doctor Underwood entered then. "I am going home for a few hours," he began, "I hardly dare breathe hope, but his sleep seems tranquil, though his pulse is very low. If nothing worse should occur between this and noon ——"

"O heaven bless you!" She was crying on her son's breast, but she put out her hand.

"No, don't begin to hope just yet," he entreated.

"Sherburne," his mother entreated, "you must go and get some rest. It was very good of you to watch here all night with me."

"And a bath. I am old and stiff." He tried to smile, but there was a mistiness in his eyes.

The duties of the day began. There was breakfast and the children gathered about in a sort of solemn eagerness to hear the news of papa. Sherburne had gone to bed, he was quite worn out.

Afterward Tessy was admitted to her husband's bedside. The illness had begun to tell on his stalwart frame. His eyes were sunken, his mouth drawn, and the stray white hairs at his temples had increased noticeably. The stillness was wonderfully like death.

"His breathing is better. But we thought several times through the night that he was surely gone. It is curious, Tessy, but there was another time when I watched with him and thanked God as I do now."

Then he had a hope. She raised her eyes in wordless gratitude.

By noon it was a hope sure and steadfast. God had given him back from the confines of the grave.

"But it is still very critical," confessed Doctor Carew. "For the next three or four days he will be in great danger of a relapse which probably would prove fatal. So the utmost watchfulness will be required."

"Yes," she responded, her heart full of thanksgiving.

There was a little snow presently. Grandpapa Beaumanoir came over in spite of the cold and storm, and was much moved at the good news, as well as delighted to see Doctor Carew.

"You are our strong tower in time of trouble," he declared. "And how is my dear girl and the children?"

That meant Lyndell, he knew. No father's love could be more solicitous.

Bertram came for a greeting. Now that the great strain was removed, for in youth it is only a step from despair to hope, Bertram was full of enthusiasm over his progress at college, and bright with eager plans.

"You won't mind if I take him home for an hour or two," said the old gentleman. "Grandmother will be delighted to see him. And Sherburne?"

"Sherburne sat up all night with me, and has been sent to bed." The little mother's face glowed as she said this.

Bertram was not very ready to go, but he hated to refuse grandpapa.

When Doctor Underwood returned he could see an improvement. The pulse had gained strength.

Judge Beaumanoir opened his eyes presently and gazed languidly around.

"O Bert," he exclaimed, feebly. "It is good to see you. I've been rather shaky and don't feel very solid yet."

They gave him some nourishment and he dropped off to sleep again.

"I do not feel very secure," confessed Doctor Underwood, "but there is a reasonable hope."

"Nothing must excite him to waste his strength."

When Sherburne came down at mid-afternoon, he looked refreshed and brilliant, yet a little alarmed as well.

"O, how could I sleep so! And papa?"

"There has been some improvement. He knew Uncle Carew. But we are all barred out——"

There was a sweet consenting quiver in the voice that could not quite steady itself. Sherburne kissed his mother with fervent tenderness.

The children wanted a turn at their big brother. They went off to the schoolroom so that they should not disturb any one.

Matters were so much better the ensuing morning, that Doctor Carew thought it safe to return to his duties. There was a trusty nurse, and a young doctor employed at the hospital to ease up Doctor Underwood who had been most devoted.

"Of course I shall not go back with you," said Sherburne. "But Bertram had better return to his studies."

"Yes," replied Doctor Carew. "I shall feel more at ease to have you here, and for the next two or three days report morning and night."

Sherburne bowed acquiescently.

Bertram was quite divided in his duty, but his mother overruled. He really did hate to lose the time.

"You may just go in and kiss papa, but do not say a word," exclaimed his mother.

Papa was asleep. He tired very easily and dozed off.

They came back to ordinary life after the strain. Princess was sweet and solicitous and there were bits of confidence between her and her mother, and letters that brought a dainty flush to her cheek, love-letters that she hardly supposed the professor could write. The children were so glad to get her home again, and she had to spend the evenings with them, telling about "everybody," and all she had seen.

Sherburne was rather grave and quite devoted to his mother, taking charge of little business details, and after a few days relieving the nurses somewhat, and Doctor Underwood, who had been most solicitous. Fanny was very proud of her husband's skill and claimed all 'the credit, "for Doctor Carew did not really do anything," she declared, rather resentfully.

"I wanted him in case—he was a great comfort to Tessy. I gave up hope twice that night, but Carew wouldn't. He inspires one," said her husband.

"You were desperately tired out. You did all the real work."

"And I shall take all the credit, never fear, and demand all the bill," laughingly.

"Do you think Sherburne will make a good doctor?"

"That is too big a question to answer at present. He seems rather more serious than usual."

The young man was doing a good deal of thinking in these days. He had been very gentle to Princess, but the subject of their quarrel had not been touched upon. She felt that he must see presently how really ungenerous

he had been, and make amends to Uncle Con and Gertrude.

He spent many hours in his father's room. One of the nurses was no longer needed since Sherburne insisted upon supplying his place. He read a little, but he was ready at a look or sound. More than once he thought of the great change his father's death would have made. And it had come so near !

It was pitiful to see such weakness. He had never known his father to be really ill, and to have him lie an hour at a time pallid and not even moving his hand, to hear him speak a few words feebly, or leave off in the midst of a sentence as if he had no strength for the next word, made the case seem absolutely hopeless yet to him. And when the nurse fed him and he resigned himself to the ministrations without even a sigh, Sherburne was inexpressibly shocked. He had seen some cases of utter helplessness in the hospitals that were considered incurable ; what if this should be paralysis in some insidious form ?

"Do you truly think he will recover ?" he asked, earnestly, of Doctor Underwood one morning. "He doesn't seem to make any improvement."

"Yes, he has made a great deal," with a kindly, encouraging smile. "You are hardly old enough in the business to have medical eyes that can detect the slight alterations. He was very ill, and he no longer has youth on his side, though he has a fine constitution. Look at Mr. and Mrs. Beaumanoir at their time of life ! We are proud enough of them. But your father has developed a good deal of heart weakness and no one can hurry that. Are you anxious to get back to your studies ? Are you deeply interested, Sherburne ?"

"I like some aspects of medicine. No, I can't say that I am *deeply* interested."

"A man's whole soul ought to be in his profession. I felt sorry you could not consider it the right thing to follow your father's wishes. And now he will need a son more than ever whose interests would lie in the same direction. Thank heaven I shall have a boy who will follow in my footsteps. I can see the bent of his mind already. Don't be discouraged. Your father will come out all right. Indeed it is a great advantage to both of us that he should not worry about anything."

Sherburne, left quite alone, glanced out of the window. It was a glorious April morning. In less than a week spring had burst into wonderful growth and loveliness. All the air was sweet, and one could have the windows open. New life was rejoicing everywhere, in the fragrant breeze, in the song of birds, in the new leaves, the woodland bloom.

"A son whose interests would lie in the same direction." His uncle's words seemed to linger in the very air, and to smite him with a feeling he could not analyze on the instant. Then he glanced at the pale, still face, fine, handsome and noble, in spite of the lines of illness.

What a long holiday his twenty years had been! There was great rejoicing over his birth, and he had been named for his great uncle who had died in youth away from home. This splendid old Sherburne House was to be his some day, it had been a grand gift of Aunt Lyndell. His boyhood had been full of love and pleasure, his school-days bright with study, games, fun and a long delightful vacation every summer with the most gladsome of home joys and love and indulgence on every side.

He had taken his own way in entering a German university, and then he had changed his mind, why he hardly knew, except that he had an overwhelming fancy to remain in New York.

And he had really wasted his winter. He saw that now. He had the gift of acquiring easily, and he *was* interested in study. He had been ambitious, too. Heretofore he had taken a pride in distinguishing himself.

He wondered now what he had given back for all this love and care ! He had dipped into a few boyish follies, but in the main he had been clean and wholesome and upright. That was largely his mother's wise, gentle influence. And now—how delightful he could make all his father's coming years !

The judge woke and stirred. Sherburne was beside him with an entreating, questioning glance.

"I should like a drink. And Sherburne, smooth this pillow. Push it up a little. That is right. O my son, how good it is to have you here."

The dark eyes immeasurably softened, smiled down into his, and affection awoke in every line of the boyish face. He bent over and kissed his father with a new and reverent tenderness.

After the first week there was a decided change. What an atmosphere of joy it diffused through the house ! The children were allowed in singly. Princess brought her sewing and sat by the window ; she had inherited her mother's grace of being busy without any flutter or the confusion so annoying to illness. And the devoted wife looked after bodily comforts.

"Sherburne," his father said one morning, as he was bolstered up in the bed, "I wish you would get the let-

ters and read them over to me. You will have to be my private secretary for awhile."

"Gladly," was the reply.

So the letters were read and commented upon. It did seem as if the head of the legal firm had been greatly missed, and already some matters had gone awry. He sighed a little.

"I wonder if you would mind going up to Washington?" he asked, rather feebly.

"O no," with cheerful readiness. "Anything that I can do for you."

"Then if you will help me straighten out these matters a bit and do a little writing. There is an important case coming on, too. I did mean to argue it, but I shall not be able. I should like to know what points Bristow is making."

Sherburne rolled out the table and began to arrange for business, answering letters, jotting down various points, and his well-trained mind was of great assistance to the judge's rather lethargic intellection. There was a silence of some moments and the broad brow gathered into a perceptible frown.

"O dear, illness does play havoc with a man's perspicacity," he said, in a discouraged tone. "I'm tired and my wits have gone wool-gathering. See what you can do by yourself, Sherburne."

The judge nestled down among the pillows and in a few moments was breathing regularly in a pleasant slumber, unmindful of aught else.

Tessy had felt a little troubled about this. The judge had trained himself to be especially alert.

"It is the very best thing that could happen to him," said Doctor Underwood, "though it shows that he

has come very close to physical exhaustion. If he was nervous and wakeful it would prolong the strain. Let him sleep all he can."

Sherburne read letters and made drafts of answers. Then there were opinions. He did not want to go rummaging through the library and used his own judgment and the knowledge he had gleaned promiscuously. When his father woke and had a glass of milk they went on again, he annotating the letters.

"Send these off at once," he requested. "Then this afternoon we will take up the rest. You may read to me if it isn't too wearisome to go over old news. I want to know what the world has been doing since I have lain here."

"Nothing would be wearisome that affords you pleasure," the son answered, quietly.

Sherburne was a very fine reader. He had the rare gift of intonation that could put the meaning of a sentence just where it belonged, and make any description vivid. His voice was melodious and strong as well. What a fine speaker he would make, his father thought, and what an advocate!

He went up to his father's office the next morning. Mr. Bristow was delighted to hear so good a report.

"But we've missed your father desperately!" he declared, with emphasis. "Zounds! what a brain the man has! You ought to be proud enough of being such a man's son. Some day I hope he will be sent abroad to represent the country for its own honor, though it needs such men at home as well. And now let us see."

He opened the packet of papers and ran them over with numerous comments.

"O, this sounds just like the judge. Walford, listen

to this. He hasn't let his mind lie fallow evidently. Sometimes a fever urges the brain into brilliancy at the expense of common sense, but it has not done so here. O, this is the judge all over! Young fellow, you tell your father we can almost forgive him for falling ill at this crisis. And here is a point—I've lain awake nights trying to put a new and stronger aspect on this threadbare reasoning. Here it is, brilliant as gold. Zounds! Walford, I haven't any doubt but we will win the case, only the judge's personal magnetism is a great card. Put in this point!"

Sherburne felt the warm color going up to the roots of his hair. The idea had been his and his father had seized upon it eagerly. Then he had been of some assistance.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LAMP OF REASON.

LADEN with a bundle of papers Sherburne went over to Aunt Violet's to dinner. Gayeties had come mostly to an end and except for the Easter weddings, nothing was planned but summer tours. Uncle Paul was strongly minded to spend the season in Germany and Switzerland, taking all the children, Violet being included.

"Do you know," said Pearl, "that I think it an awful shame that you must run up to New York when we should have been so glad to have you here, Cousin Sherburne. You are by far too handsome to be wasted upon that helter-skelter society, and you look as if you danced to perfection. And medicine is such a musty, stuffy, horrid profession! Why couldn't you ask some one's advice before plunging into the depths of dry bones?"

"Yours?" he inquired, laughingly.

"Yes, mine. It is worth something to people who can shine in society."

How lovely she was with her dazzling complexion and lustrous, bewildering eyes, and the pretty changing curves of her red, sweet mouth!

"And I dare say you have gone and engaged yourself to some plain, strong-minded young woman, who has forsworn the frivolities of life and does duty work in the slums."

"No, I am not engaged," but he flushed.

"On the very verge of it," she insisted.

"Not even on the verge of it," he answered, laughingly.

"Oh dear! we shall all be old maids and old bachelors! Here have been four attractive girl cousins, all sweet and amiable, with more or less good looks, and not one engagement! Princess had a very warm admirer, but Uncle Con whisked her up to the city. Doesn't Gertrude Maurice make an admirable wife? She was one of 'us girls'; that is some comfort. And what of Ned Beaumanoir? You and he are getting on the serious list."

"Ned hopes to be a 'Ph. D.' in June. He has been teaching and studying. I have not seen much of him. Is twenty on the serious list?"

"Goodness me! Are you only twenty? Such a great big, handsome fellow!"

They both laughed at that, and then Pearl gave him some amusingly serious advice concerning the snares young women would set for him, and the adroitness with which he must evade them. How utterly charming she was! And Violet was not far behind.

Uncle Paul sent him over to the station in the carriage as he had promised to come in on the late train. And somehow he could not feel like a heart-broken young man who had suffered the shame and agony of a woman's perfidy. He had a curious sense of elation, also an undercurrent of humiliation. Now that he looked squarely at his winter he had to admit it was not a success, nor yet an unsucccess to be proud of. Yes, he had really been in love with Gertrude Maurice, and if she had not restrained him he would have plunged into all manner of foolishness. Suppose she had looked at him with such

sweet, wondering, mystifying eyes as Pearl had made to-night? Well—of course, her eyes were not as fine. He had never insisted to himself that Gertrude was beautiful. And—if she had loved him—if before his life had been set in proper lines he had been hampered by an engagement!

That he was getting very much out of love and in the realm of common sense was evident when his very soul gave a quick throb of thankfulness. And if she had married Uncle Con for money and position was he not well rid of such a mercenary, selfish woman?

Then somehow he had not made the impression on Uncle Carew that he had hoped. They all adored him in the family, but—well, *he* had not studied, he had been careless, wayward, indifferent, quite his own master, and Uncle Carew *was* right in not approving of such a lawless course. Had he, Sherburne, not been right anywhere?

He felt sore over this new estimate of himself. He was glad to be sitting in a darkened corner of the stuffy night train, he was glad of the cool, fragrant ride out home with only a few stars and the sky full of white scudding drifts. He wished he could hide away for a few weeks until he came to have a good opinion of himself once more. He had not gone down to the depths while self-esteem was the great thing.

His mother met him in the hall.

“O mamma, why did you stay up to this late hour?” he cried. “Surely ——”

“O, all is right and well,” kissing him fondly. “I only wanted to be sure you had come. Papa has missed you so. O, I wonder if children ever realize how dear they are to their parents?”

He took her in his arms. "No, mother, they do not," in a voice that was unsteady from emotion. "I think now they have to live a long while before they can understand all the sacredness of it. I am only just beginning. But you will see as the years go on—God helping me."

Then they both kissed amid tears.

Sherburne spent most of the next day in his father's room. The judge was promoted to sitting up in a chair and allowed to look out at the magnificent garniture of the world, especially Sherburne House. They were to be very careful about draughts, but if he progressed favorably in another week he might come downstairs.

Sherburne produced his new budget of papers and repeated the pleasant and satisfactory visit at the office. They went over the case with a good deal of zest. Sherburne entered curiously into the spirit of the argument as if he was really fighting the case himself.

"He would have made a splendid lawyer," his father thought with a sigh.

Every day there was some improvement now that he had started. He walked about the room, then in the next apartment and out to the schoolroom where the children hailed him with joy. And then downstairs to the noonday luncheon.

But the illness had made great ravages with him as it often does with men at middle life. His eyes were languid, the rosiness had gone out of his face and wrinkles were settling about his eyes and temples.

Mr. Bristow was not a little shocked when he came down for a final review of the case.

Still the old spirit and fire remained.

"There were two or three very fine points in this,

quite original and telling," exclaimed Mr. Bristow. "You did not lose your force and freshness, evidently."

"Something of that is due my son. He has been a great help to me," was the satisfied reply.

"Well! well! A chip of the old block! Judge, what made you allow him to stray off to the dissecting of bones and compounding of messes, when there were fine opportunities right at hand? We want some strong, eager blood, and well trained minds to meet the coming momentous questions and to make a stand in the name of justice and honor, and the larger respect for one's country."

"I wish he had chosen that way," responded the father, with a sigh of fresh disappointment.

Truth to tell, Sherburne was so interested in the case that he went up to hear it argued. It was the greed of a big corporation on one side, and honesty, truth and humanity on the other. It was a splendid and vivid scene, and his pulses throbbed now with fear, now with triumph. He thought they could have made some points stronger. Why it had the ring of the battle fray, and he longed to be in the arena.

They had telegraphed the success of their side to the judge, but there was so much for Sherburne to relate. His eyes kindled with enthusiasm and his voice had a triumphant ring as if he had been pleading himself.

It was a happy and grateful household. And then came a wave from outside to make a disturbance.

This was a letter from Professor Kenneth. Of course through Judge Beaumanoir's illness it would have been an unwarranted intrusion to present any claim, or ask any favor, but the lover with his punctilious sense of respect due in such a case, felt rather as if he had been indulging

in a clandestine correspondence. More than once he had resolved to wait until he could prefer his wishes in person, but the letters had been such a delight, and he had longed to hear of the daily progress toward recovery, so he had yielded to the seductive temptation, but now he felt it imperative. There was an important reason that he could explain better in conversation than by letter.

"Yes," commented Mrs. Beaumanoir. And then mother and daughter looked at each other like suddenly detected conspirators.

"Mamma," Princess began, after a little thought, "I will give him the letter to read, and tell him how it happened. There will be quite a long engagement of course, and we can have time to get used to the fact," flushing and trying to smile.

"O yes, a long engagement," said the mother. "You are so young."

"Nineteen in a few months."

"But you seem younger than that. And somehow I have had so little of you."

"I will stay at home a year," she promised.

Judge Beaumanoir sat out of doors under the shade of three great trees that made a bower of greenery. He had Aunt Aurelia's wheeling chair and could go from point to point and have the fresh air and some exercise without tiring himself. Sherburne had gone in to Ardmore with some important mail, and had promised to lunch with Aunt Fanny who never abrogated any rights and privileges.

"Papa," began a sweet voice as Princess leaned over the arm of his chair and kissed him, "here is a letter for you to read. And then I have a story to tell you that—that happened just as you were taken ill."

She did not want to look at him, so she pressed her cheek close to his, unthinkingly, but he felt the soft color come and go with her breathing. Just such a dainty little thing her mother had been when he wooed her. Yet —somehow —

“My child.” He drew her closer, but he knew she was given away with her own and her mother’s consent. “Two lovers in one season. Are you quite sure, Princess?”

“Quite, papa. I liked Mr. Sevier very much, and I thought Professor Kenneth loved some one else, so I tried ——”

“And that is not the love a fine young fellow like Mr. Sevier deserves.”

“No, it is not,” earnestly.

“Your mother mentioned this admirer long ago, so it doesn’t take me quite by surprise. I suppose he will have to come and I will have to consent. There is no fault to find with his character, I believe. He has some independent means and a good profession, but men of his acquirements never get rich. And he seems rather grave ——”

“But I like the serious side. And I like the intellectual poise. I should want to be very proud of——” my husband she was going to say, but paused from delicacy, “of the one I chose. I should want him to stand up with the best and finest, and to feel sure that his gentleness did not have a weak strand in it, and that he was a seeker after the real truths. Some one who would like me to keep step with him and not relegate me to childish and frivolous pursuits.”

“What an ambitious little body !”

A happy undercurrent of earnestness seemed to touch

her with its lightest tone and diffuse a fine spiritual grace over her features. He could understand the leaning toward the intellectual side and was proud of it, but would she live any nobler, sweeter life than her mother?

"Are you not quite satisfied, papa?"

The soft appealing voice touched him, moved him almost to tears, and he took her in his arms, kissing her fervently.

"I shall be satisfied with your happiness, my darling. And that we know is not altogether dependent on money or position or the praise of the world, but the inner life two people enjoy who are devoted to each other, who do not allow clouds of misunderstanding to arise, and who do their whole duty. All the rest is very pleasant, but it would never make amends for love. And when one goes down to the very soul of things there is nothing so comforting. I have not outgrown it myself. And I am sorry for the lover who comes to be denied."

"I am sorry, too, papa. I sometimes wonder if it was right to try—if it gave him a hope."

"You must not torment your sweet soul. Love is quite independent of one's own volition, even at times when it is most unwise, and demands a sacrifice of self. And so I suppose we must send for this lover and allow him to say his say, and then he will take you away."

"But I am not going in a long time," smilingly.

"I couldn't give you up if there were not some more girls. Thank two little sisters that I am not selfish."

"Papa was very good and sweet," she said to her mother when she entered the house. "And now I must write my letter."

She was extremely happy and busy and tender. It

was such a delicious thing to live and be happy, and have love on every side.

"Princess, what *is* the matter?" asked Sherburne, a day or two after. "You seem just running over with something, and though we are all grateful and glad about papa, why you should be so much more joyous puzzles me."

Princess' face was scarlet. O, had Sherburne loved in this manner? No wonder then that he had felt hurt and angry, but Gertie had not really promised to love him.

"You will know to-morrow, so perhaps I had better make a virtue of it and tell you to-day. Professor Kenneth is coming down, and ——"

"O Prin! You don't mean — What possesses all you girls to fall in love with old fellows!"

"He isn't so very old," was the sober reply.

"Bertram will go wild with joy. You will have to share a divided heart. And—you love him?"

"Of course," rather gaily; but with bright color.

Sherburne began to pace up and down with his hands clasped behind his back.

"Princess," he exclaimed, suddenly, "I talked a lot of bosh about Gertrude Maurice, didn't I?"

"O—don't call it that!" she cried, in a hurt tone. Could he so soon get over even an ordinary affection? The briefest one seemed sacred in her eyes.

"Yes, it was bosh! It was worse. I begin to think now I acted like a brute or a fiend."

"And you did not love her?" in surprise.

"Yes, I did. Perhaps in the course of my life I shall see some one to love quite as well, for after all, why should a fellow go mooning for years about a woman who did not care for him. Yes, I think Gertie cared a

good deal and we might have been jolly good friends if I hadn't taken up this idiotic notion ! I was half jealous of all the younger fellows, but I didn't really think of Uncle Con. I begin to see that I was a conceited fool all the way through."

"O Sherburne !" with tenderest sympathy.

"I've done a good deal of sober thinking since I came home. Princess, I do not believe even you can understand the feeling it gave me when mother came to my arms that night, just as if all else was gone, and I was her sole dependence. It roused all the manliness in me, and I had been just a pleasure-loving fellow, suiting himself and not caring much how other people liked it. And the strain of those days ——"

His voice had a tremble in it and he stopped a moment. Princess would have clasped her arms about him, but she was afraid they would both cry over the remembered sorrow.

"So I have thought a good deal and had several fights with my own vanity and folly and that determination to make everybody see through my eyes, even Gertrude," and he gave a half forced laugh. "I have wanted to mend a statement I insisted upon, but there has not come to hand just the opportunity. It was not true or fair about her, and I am heartily ashamed that I should have done such an unmanly thing. She *did* decline my proposal before Uncle Con asked her—probably she has told you all this. I gathered a little hope from one thing she said—that she was not counting on marriage for some years to come. And when I found out the engagement I *was* furious. I didn't mind what I said. I acted like an idiot, and I guess I made every one pretty uncomfortable. I just wish I could blot the whole thing out, I

feel so mean and foolish about it. Gertrude *was* right and sensible, and an engagement would have been a wretched thing."

"I am glad you see that," Princess said, in a sweet tone, raising her eyes with a commendation still stronger.

"So I want to ask your pardon for the bad tempers and the untrue things I said. I think lying a mean, despicable vice, and false accusations and all that, and I am heartily ashamed of having been betrayed into such unreasonable folly. I wanted to make myself believe that I was a badly used and much injured heroic young fellow, whose life and prospects were set all astray, when I had not even taken hold of the sensible end of life."

"Uncle Con will be so glad. You will tell him?" persuasively.

Sherburne's face was scarlet.

"I do owe him an apology, and when I get enough courage, shall make it. And I ought to thank Gertie for her good sense. She said I would live to thank her, and that a man who would throw himself away because a woman did not like him was a very poor sort of man. He would be an unmitigated fool! I can't help thinking that Gertie was charming and agreeable and bright, and there was another indescribable quality that she rarely used to me, but when she did I went up to the seventh heaven. I suppose that is fascination. And no matter how much I cared, an honest man has no right to be thinking or longing for another man's wife."

"O no, no!"

"You see I have had a good many hours in which to think these things over. And papa has been so good and generous and indulgent that I must consider how to make some return."

"O Sherburne!" She did clasp her arms about his neck then and kissed him with warm affection.

"I don't know but I am a volatile, unsteady fellow after all, and I really do want to make the sort of man that wields an influence in the world. I am not sure that medicine is my forte and I think now if father will take me into training, I won't rebel even if it is hard. I do want to be a man of purpose and endeavor."

"He will be so glad. O, have you told him?"

"No, I have not yet. You see I have taken up two things already, and I am afraid he won't have real faith in me. But I am going to write to Uncle Carew and explain all to him. I am ashamed of the past winter. The only redeeming feature is that it was foolish and not really vicious. Dear Princess, how I must have tried you. O, I hope you will be very, very happy."

Her eyes were dewy with emotion.

"I cannot tell you how delighted your resolve makes me. I know your decision was a great disappointment to papa. And now that he has been spared to us we must try to show him our earnest love not only in words but deeds."

Princess was very proud of her handsome brother just then. She did love peace and unity, and truth and all the higher virtues, and Sherburne had caused her many a heartache with his unjust view of matters and his unreasonable tempers. And she had given thanks when she remarked the fact of his growing into accord with papa, of his paying a sweet filial reverence, and no longer indulging in cynical and faithless flings.

He went to the station on Saturday and brought home not only Princess' lover, but Bertram, who coaxed the indulgence out of him and was full of enthusiastic joy over his father's recovery.

Before Sunday evening the household felt in the very air that Professor Kenneth belonged to Princess in some mysterious manner. They sat out on the wide, fragrant porch and watched the young moon coming up, and he had little difficulty in finding love's own mysterious language into which to put sentences as he held the dainty little hands. But she was glad the soft twilight hid her glowing cheeks.

All day he had hidden half his errand. But it was confessed on Monday. He had received a very flattering proposal to be one of the speakers at the Oxford Summer School, and also to deliver a course of five lectures before a scientific society of note. He would have to go abroad immediately after commencement, when his duties in the city ended. There would be a stay of a month at least in London, and then time for a little tour on the continent. And if he might take Princess!

Of course he had no more idea of wedding finery than he had of building a house, only people were married every day and went their way as if it was the simplest thing in the world. The journey would be so delightful for Princess, and somehow she rather longed to see her husband acquit himself among the English savants. Then the season would be at its height, and after all it was quite a grand thing to see the titled style and quality.

"But I promised mamma a year," she said, ruefully. "I thought it would be a long engagement."

"But I have loved you a long while," he said, in reply, "and it has had the solemnity of an engagement to me. If you could only consent;" and there was a wistfulness in his tone that went to her young heart.

Doctor Underwood had said a sea voyage would do

more for the judge than anything else, and urged him to go. The Amorys would be abroad, and they had suggested Princess joining them.

Grandmamma Beaumanoir and Aunt Fanny would care for the rest of the children and look after Sherburne House.

However nothing was positively decided. The little mother must have time to consider. And only such a few weeks intervened !

Judge Beaumanoir had been very well pleased with his prospective son-in-law and quite satisfied with his devotion. But he had grown so fond of his darling he hated to give her up.

Perhaps it was the long talk the father and son had a few days later that settled the matter. For Sherburne explained his new resolve and begged that he might begin again, this time in truer earnest, and with a higher mental resolve.

"I am still interested in medicine to a certain extent, but surgery *is* distasteful to me," he admitted. "I think I have been looking at Uncle Carew's standing and fame, without considering the steps necessary to reach it. And then I had a thought of playing Doctor Underwood's rôle down here, sometime, but he will have a son of his own to educate for the place, who will be a born surgeon."

Judge Beaumanoir gave a satisfied smile.

"Not all men can reach Doctor Carew's eminence, even if they do an excellent work in the world, and some of the most conscientious physicians live and die comparatively unknown. But I think no man could drop down, or fail to do his best work with Aunt Lyndell for a companion. And you need not consider the past winter altogether wasted. You have gained some experience of

the world, and if you settle to the law you will find that no knowledge and no training ever comes amiss."

Sherburne colored. The other experience would remain unconfessed where his parents were concerned. It was a boy's foolishness, and yet the sweetness of a first love lingered. And though he had felt a little affronted that Princess should consider it not only unwise but of no great moment or permanency, he understood that her own half-hidden regard overwhelmed it when the love was acknowledged. He had also heard it whispered that his father had once been quite in love with Aunt Lyndell, and now they were excellent friends. Auntie Dell had loved some one else; and surely his father had been very happy. So his ill-fated regard was to remain a secret in Princess' heart.

"I suppose I am thinking of the fame, and the—the admiration," confessed Sherburne, with rising color. "When I listened to Mr. Bristow's brilliant argument, which after all was largely yours, and at some moments I wanted to protest," half laughing, "I was carried along as if with a swift current. Then when one and another said—'It was fine, but if your father had spoken instead, you would have heard something remarkable,' I couldn't help thinking that it was a grand gift to be able to sway people like that. I suppose I *am* considering the attractive parts," hesitating and flushing.

"It is well to consider them. There is a great deal in what is called personal magnetism, which is largely having a gift and finding the right place in which to exercise it. We see men out of place everywhere. You are a fine speaker, Sherburne, and have a presence that will impress an audience. I will admit that it would have been the regret of my life if you had settled to

medicine. But there is a good deal of hard work before you—it is not altogether a rose-lined path.”

“You have taken many of the brambles out, and I am not sure but in some things the prestige of your name will carry me along. I have resolved in sober earnest to do my best, and next fall you will have a resolute student.”

It was true Sherburne's heart had been fired with unwonted zeal. More than one of his father's friends had spoken of the hope of seeing him follow in the same steps.

“I am more fully satisfied than you can realize now, Sherburne,” returned his father, leaning back with a smile of infinite gratification. “I did hate to think of the structure I had reared going into other hands, or dropping out altogether, for Bertram will have no gift for this profession. And I realize suddenly that I am no longer in the heyday of youth,” smiling rather regretfully; “I shall be glad to have a strong young staff to lean upon, when I begin to turn on the other side of the path where the shadows lengthen.”

Sherburne came and laid his hand on his father's shoulder. He had adored him before, of course, and been very proud of him, his soul had been full of passionate regret when he had seen him lying in death's doorway, but it seemed as if he had never truly loved him until this moment. And the boy's resolve to be a dearer, tenderer son thrilled every pulse within his soul.

“There is another point that it is well to begin with,” continued the judge, with grave sweetness. “Many men are wrecked on the rock of expediency. We look at the world and see wrong prospering everywhere, we think, and the tender gracious sacrificing souls pushed to

the wall. So we resolve upon winning success by any means. I thought this way when my ambition was first roused, and I was older than you when I began to look at life seriously. But I have learned much since, and I hope now to go on learning all my life. There is nothing like truth and integrity for the corner-stones of life. When you stand firmly by them the real fineness of human nature comes out and the world begins to respect you for the better qualities, and does not offer you its dirty work. You find the true nobleness and higher appreciation of the world. Your fellow-men trust you, even those who are continually studying how to cheat and deceive, and steal, for all money unjustly taken is stealing. We cannot right all the wrongs in this world, but we can refrain from doing what we ourselves know and recognize as a glaring wrong."

"You shall be my teacher and mentor," the young fellow replied, with a dewiness in his eyes and an unwonted touch of emotion in his voice.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HIGH RESOLVES OF YOUTH.

PRINCESS BEAUMANOIR found herself suddenly the centre of interest and attraction. Aunt Violet came down with the two girls for a little respite from gayety and a rest, and to explain her plans to grand-mamma, and found Tessy in the midst of great perplexity. Princess could hardly decide whether she wanted to be married so soon or not. When a letter came from her lover she was willing to go to the ends of the earth with him, and when she considered all that marriage meant, the beginning of a separate and lifelong interest, the solemnity awed her and she clung to her mother.

“We might all go abroad together,” said the fond mother, “and have a happy summer, and if you like, the marriage could take place in the autumn. When Sherburne is twenty-one there is to be a gathering of the Clans,” and the happy light illumined her face.

Was it possible that in a little more than three years they would have been married a quarter of a century? She was round and rosy and youthful in figure and bearing, but there were some fine traces of the finger marks of time in the happy face. And Leonard seemed to have aged suddenly during his illness. But when one saw this growing flock of girls and boys, three of whom were taking their own try at the world, one had to admit the years

"I really think I should have the marriage," decided Aunt Violet. "You see Leonard, you won't want to spend a month or so in the heat and turmoil of London, and Princess will want to see and hear everything connected with her lover. It isn't as if he was a recent acquaintance, but it is almost two years since we met him, and it seems now that he has had his eye on Princess, and been waiting for her to unfold into womanhood. Then the Carews have known about the Kenneths for years. And since he is Princess' choice—though I can't see why Mr. Sevier was not the favored one."

"I can see," answered her brother, with an amused but rather protesting expression. "Still it seems to me Mr. Sevier is more to a young girl's fancy. But Princess *is* a little different from most girls. I don't think we have ever given the midget due credit for all her ambition."

"Do you suppose that was at the bottom of her college enthusiasm? Yet she gave it up," and Violet looked puzzled.

"Her mother persuaded her out of it. College is a necessity for the women going into professions who must measure their knowledge with their brothers striving for the same place. We are still old-fashioned enough to believe in wives and mothers. But Princess will be happier with a man who is reaching up to new heights. She is like her mother, she must be ambitious for some one. And when the professor comes out of his seclusion, he is quite a charming man. She can always be proud of him and I think she need not be afraid of 'fads' running away with his good sense. Then he has a firm belief in the Creator of all. One feels safer in giving his daughter into such hands."

Judge Beaumanoir's voice unconsciously took on a reverent tone.

"It is the tribute we pay to the true coin," he added. "And people try to imitate it as nearly as possibly while they endeavor to deny the real value, and cry out that the other is just as good. But they know better, and keep rubbing up the sham to make it more nearly agree."

Violet thought of her own young life, of all their lives. Had they been more strenuous?

"There are curious changes going on in the world all the time," she said, retrospectively.

"Yes." He gave a soft little laugh. "And I think I demand more of my boy than my father demanded of me. What a lazy self-loving cub I was! But I have spent twenty years in the midst of earnest endeavor. Have I told you that Sherburne has decided to take up law?"

"O Leonard. That is splendid! And such a connection as he can step into! Then he will make a fine pleader."

"If he doesn't get spoiled by admiration! But there are a good many smart people in the world, and every one who succeeds has to make an effort. I can't tell you how glad I am to have him come back to me. I think I was pretty jealous of Bert Carew. And here is my own Bertram adoring Professor Kenneth as the greatest man in the world."

There was an expression of amused complaint in his face.

"Poor Leonard!" she said, with mock sympathy. "I feel resigned to the trial of a rather self-loving beauty. But this is wandering from the subject. Marry off the young people. Then come with us and in some quiet

German bathing town renew your health and youth. Tessy and I will pull out the white hairs that are beginning to sprinkle your temples."

"Indeed I shall cultivate them as indications of experience and wisdom. Your plan has a good deal to recommend it, however."

Sherburne endorsed it heartily. He was pretty busy attending to numerous duties for his father, who somehow did not seem to get back his old robustness.

"I think you can trust me to be head of the family awhile," he said. "I will send for Ned Beaumanoir who has studied himself to a shadow and means to take one of the big prizes. And we can ask some of the other cousins, while Aunt Fanny can boss us all."

When Judge Beaumanoir went up to Washington and returned pale and fatigued, he at once acquiesced in the plan of going abroad. And the marriage seemed to get settled of itself.

"So far as clothes go," said Aunt Violet, "Princess can have a wedding gown and a traveling dress. The rest she can buy abroad, or after she comes home in the autumn."

Mrs. Kenneth had meant to visit Washington and be in the midst of the girls, but there had been so much going on all the time. Now she was invited to Sherburne House for a good long visit, and would remain until the weather became altogether too warm.

Bertram was delighted with the prospect as well as the fact that the professor was really to belong to them, and that after he had graduated they would spend a solid year abroad, for he considered his claims almost as good as those of Princess.

Sherburne had written a very manly letter to Doctor

Carew, and received a most cordial reply. Uncle Bert entirely approved of the change.

"Not but what you could make a good physician if you had set about it in earnest," he said, "but I think there is a wider scope for your talents in the law. And you will have the best of training under your father's careful eye. We shall watch your career with as much pride as if we were to have a hand in moulding it. And whatever else you may attain to there will never be any pleasure so sweet in your later years as the knowledge that you have been a good and noble son to your father."

Many a time Sherburne had resolved to write to Uncle Con. Then he thought he would go up to the city, but he really shrank from a meeting. Now that he had come to his senses a little he saw how utterly foolish he had been, and worse still in his unfounded accusations against Gertrude. He wrote letters and tore them up. Some were too justifying, some too boyish. And at last he simply said :

"DEAR UNCLE CON :

"Will you trust me for all explanations and apologies until we meet.

"SHERBURNE."

"There!" exclaimed Uncle Con, laughingly, as he held the note before Gertrude, "the lad has come to his senses. That is better than pages of balderdash. And his going in his father's office is the most judicious step he can take. We shall be proud of the boy some day."

"He would make a charming doctor. Silly women would run crazy after him, and conjure up all manner of pains and aches. And rich women would want him at

their elbow. He could make no end of money, but it would not be a very ennobling life," returned Gertrude.

"And there are still silly women left?" There was a mischievous glint in Con Murray's eye.

"There will be until the end of time, since there are men to admire them," she retorted.

"And to think our little Princess is going to marry the wise and learned doctor of Padua, and that I have lost her completely. Perhaps she will accept a night's shelter under our hospitable roof when she returns as Mrs. Kenneth."

The Murrays had set up housekeeping and given a reception. It was thronged, though people were hurrying out of the city. More than one woman wondered "how she had captured Con Murray," and if Mrs. Townsend had not made the match. Gertrude was gracious, agreeable, and had an undeniable charm, though no one could tell exactly what it was. And she found the home atmosphere quite pungent and spicy at times, but she was equal to it. The years of bachelorhood had expanded and intensified traits that never get firmly rooted in the gardens of youth.

Princess was simply overwhelmed with letters when the fact of the coming marriage was known. Sherburne insisted that she stood in need of a private secretary to answer them all, and to acknowledge wedding gifts that were already being sent in. It surprised her to see the interest every one took in what she had meant to have a very simple affair. It would be in the old church, of course, with all the relatives around, and the little girls who had grown up to womanhood since Cousin Nora was married. Other little girls who were babies then, and who would one day have lovers and then husbands.

Aunt Julia and Ray were the first guests. Aunt Julia was very feeble now, and the indications were that Mrs. Beaumanoir who was the oldest of the Sherburne sisters would be the last one of her family and generation.

"It gives one a solemn thought," Judge Beaumanoir said to his wife, "to see the passing of families. I can remember so well my own grandfather being here and Great-aunt Aurelia, and all the own aunts and uncles. Sherburne House seems to gather all the family histories in its bosom. And presently my darling, we shall be old folks, with our children married off. Six weddings. Think of it!"

"Some one will have to provide for three of them," she returned with a smile. "And we shall not mind growing old when we have two such lovely examples as your parents and mine."

He stooped and kissed her and recalled the first time her mother and father came to Sherburne House.

There were lovely days for Princess and her mother, since they had taken Aunt Violet's advice about wedding gear, and Uncle Con had sent her a lovely wedding gown of beautiful lace to be worn over silk. The marriage could not take place until mid-June, on account of the commencements. But passages were engaged and all things made ready. Ned Beaumanoir had gladly accepted his cousin's invitation to come and "keep house."

Then Mrs. Kenneth and Ruth Ensign arrived. They had traveled carefully, though Mrs. Kenneth had improved through the winter. She sometimes did, and then dropped back again. But she had been very tranquil in her mind over her daughter's happiness, and taken a warm interest in her brother-in-law's hopes.

"It will be quite an ideal marriage, as you will see,"

she said to Tessy. "They have so many tastes and beliefs alike, and he has such a world of undeveloped tenderness. The most fortunate step of his whole life was going to Melchias, though he and Mr. Murray had been friends for years."

Princess became quite accustomed to hearing the marriage discussed, though it sometimes seemed as if the interested person must be some other than herself. And if there had been a lingering suspicion about Ruth it was quite set at rest now. She took the warmest satisfaction in the marriage, and she repeated so many bits of talk in this fashion —

"One night when we were sitting round the fire the professor exclaimed, 'O, do you remember our climb up Robin's Point, when Miss Princess said this or that, or our walk on the rocky shore when Miss Princess repeated this bit of verse?' I think he never forgot anything you said or did. It was like a picture in his mind. I felt sure by that it must be love. And Princess, dear, what a sweet thing it is to be loved so well."

It was doubly sweet to hear this.

Ray was very tender and affectionate also, though she admitted she was surprised at first.

In the city there were thousands of hopes and fears, loves and heartbreaks, ambitions and disappointments. The professor went his way with outward quiet, attended his classes, made plans for the coming year, advised, consoled, examined, and made time every evening to write to his betrothed. Deeply as he was engrossed he did not forget for a moment the sunshine that was to bless his life, the heart that was to beat in unison with his. "His little girl," he often said, and he was glad she was small and dainty and fine. Not for a world

would he have her changed in any particular. And he often wondered how he had dared to choose her, how out of the world of attractive men she had preferred him.

That is the mystery of love, never to be explained or unfolded. The soul that quickens and kindles, and awakes a depth one hardly dreamed of possessing, and draws one hitherward until there is the delicious fusion of soul and spirit—and life is pervaded with a heavenly satisfaction—can one weigh and apportion a part to each?

Bertram's first year in college had been a success. There were some trials and irritations, some failures and amendments, but the examinations were passed successfully, and he was now a triumphant sophomore.

"I shall not stay for all the rest," he said, eagerly, to his uncle. "I'm just wild to see papa, as he is going away so soon. And Princess and all of them."

So he packed his trunk for a good, long vacation and no end of fun.

"Though I do hope Sher won't turn cross and nasty, and boss us all about. Think how funny it will be for him and Cousin Ned to be the grand high dukes!"

But that very evening Cousin Ned came in, large-eyed, thin and triumphant.

"Wish me joy! My paper takes the first prize, three hundred dollars. And my degree is sure. You must come, Uncle Carew and Auntie Dell, and see me acquit myself. And I've earned enough to carry me through without asking father for a penny."

"A fine record, my boy," said Doctor Carew, heartily. He was thinking, too, of his own boy and wondering a little—he had set his heart on a plan for him, but occasionally there had been a fear. He was a good student, a fine athlete, an enthusiastic lad about games and sports.

In his boyhood he had been extremely proud of his father's profession and quite resolved to follow it. Later he seldom referred to it, indeed the last year when the boys talked over their plans he never announced his, if he had any. But that he was studying resolutely for something, his father well understood.

There had been a good deal of excitement about the wedding, the close of school, the visit at Sherburne House, and the winding up of various benevolent works, as well as the summer charities and plans for vacation.

"The children have been invited to remain at Sherburne House as long as they like," said Lyndell. "Randolph proposes to stay all summer with the boys, so he is provided for. Millicent must have seaside. O dear, every year grows busier! What a responsibility was taken off of us when Sherburne settled his future. And Bertram will be in the professor's care next year. We shall be quite by ourselves."

"We ought to be thankful they have all fared so well. Really they are a set of young people to be proud of," the Doctor smiled cordially.

"I wonder if Randolph will try to enter college. He is so reticent about his own plans."

"He doesn't mean to this year, I know."

"He is quite young—I think he had better wait."

"He has no intention. Another year at the institute will do him no harm." But the crease in the doctor's brow deepened. He thought sometimes he had been too busy with other people's lives to give the proper interest to his own children, since they were healthy and happy, and surrounded by love and comfort.

Prodigies were not at all to his liking. He had re-

solved that nerves and intellect, physical speculation and training should be left to a later period. There had sometimes been over-indulgence on the part of his father and Aunt Neale, he thought, but this was a hard matter to restrict, so he had let it go with a smile.

It was quite late when Randolph came in from his boy friend's. They talked about Ned's prize at which he was delighted.

"I wonder if you would like to go to Sherburne with Bertram to-morrow?" his mother asked. "He is through and so are you."

"No, not to-morrow. And I would like to hear Cousin Ned. When do you go?"

"Just in time for the wedding, with all my caravan," and a laugh shone in the mother's eyes. "Princess is as exigent as Nora was. Every girl cousin must be gowned in white. What a pretty sight it will be."

"Yes, quite worth seeing. It is funny to think of Princess marrying Professor Kenneth. Then it will be next week."

Lyndell nodded. She was studying the big boy from top to toe. His curly, bright brown hair, his fair face somewhat sunburned, his merry eyes not as soft as hers were now, not indeed "velvet eyes" as Millicent had called them, but full of fire and spirit as well as fun; a very respectable nose and a rather firm mouth and chin. Not the Beaumanoir beauty to be sure, hardly beauty at all at sixteen, but honest and upright and fearless. A fine frame, filled out rather more than one might expect at that age, but Randolph had never been "spindling." How tall he was—quite overtopping Bertram.

"Well, mamma," with a rather embarrassed laugh, "is there something unusual about me?"

"Except that you grow every moment. What a tall fellow you are!"

"But the Carews grow up quickly, Aunt Neale says," was the boy's reply.

"And some day we shall have you bringing home prizes, I hope," said his mother. "I can't have my children distanced."

He colored, and made as if he would speak, but did not. Dell remarked it.

"You must go to bed. We must all go," exclaimed his father. "But, my son, I do not like to have you staying out so late as this."

"We were talking of something that interested me very much, and I did not notice the time. But it was settled as far as it could be and won't be talked over again."

"Is it a secret?" asked his mother, as she rose. "Boys have secrets as well as girls."

Randolph came and put his hand over his father's shoulder, but he was looking at his mother, and an odd flush wavered over his face.

"I didn't mean to say anything just yet, because it is so uncertain, but I think I ought not go on keeping it to myself, though I am afraid ——"

"Is it any trouble?" asked his father, quickly, in the pause.

"It's a wish, my wish, but I know it is not what you have planned for me. I am beginning to think I could not agree to that unless you insisted, and it doesn't seem as if any one ought to take up a profession half-heartedly."

"I shall not insist," returned his father, gravely. "What is your preference?"

"I have another year at school, I know. I should

not be old enough until then. I want to go to West Point afterward."

"O Randolph!" his mother said, almost sharply.

"That may be only a boy's fancy. Boys change their minds. And there are some other things. It is a government appointment after you have passed your examination."

"Yes, that is what we were talking about to-night. Philip Weston's uncle will have a voice in the appointment of the candidate next year. He wanted Phil to try for it, but Phil isn't a bit soldierly. And I should like it so! I've been studying up a good deal. And if I wasn't a soldier I should want to take up engineering. I want a broad, active, out-of-doors life."

He looked fine and spirited as he said this. Then as no one answered at once, he continued —

"I know grandpapa will feel disappointed. He has destined me for papa's footsteps, and if I did not come up to your standard I should always feel sorry and mortified. I know I can't. It isn't in me. And it really wasn't in Cousin Sherburne, you see, although he thought he liked it at first. One ought to put one's whole soul in whatever one elects. And the reason I can read Homer so well is because the fighting and the splendid courage in it stirs every pulse of me. And Cicero doesn't interest me half as much."

"There is a good deal of other fighting in the world," said his mother. "And a great deal of bravery needed, and resolve and high purpose."

"But the kind you like appeals the most strongly to you," replied the boy, his eyes alight with eager purpose.

"See how late it is," subjoined his father. "There

will be time to have a good many talks about this in a year, so we needn't decide to-night."

"But I'm glad to have you know what I am thinking about, and what I would rather do."

No one answered and he bent over and kissed his father good-night. He had not grown too old for that.

When he was gone Lyndell went over to her husband and seating herself on the broad arm of the chair leaned her head down on his shoulder.

"It's something of a bombshell in our domestic tent," he began, with a touch of amusement, rather more indeed than he felt.

"O Bertram! you will never consent. It is a boy's whim," she said in a tone of disapproval.

"If it is a boy's whim it will die out. I am not so much surprised after all. For the last year he has not mentioned medicine of his own accord. I confess it has been a favorite dream of mine. And then his being named after father ——"

"After both of you," she amended.

"Well, father has set his heart on it the most strongly. And he is an old man with not a great many new hopes now. Yes, I am sorry. But a dozen things can happen. He is very young and may not pass. Then after his four years' training he may not get an appointment in these piping times of peace. It is not as certain as the navy. We will not distress ourselves just yet."

"And think of Harry Lepage, with all his honors and promotions, roaming about the world homeless, wifeless, childless."

"Sailing, you mean." He kissed the mother of Randolph Carew in a comforting fashion. "Naval officers *do* have wives and children if they so elect. And the

military training at its best is excellent. There is self-imposed discipline, implicit obedience, endurance, regular work —— ”

“And temptation—gambling and drunkenness,” she exclaimed with strong abhorrence.

“Which we find here in our city, among rich and poor. Then, my dear, you forget about Major Stanwood, a noble gentleman, and Archie. I think the very discipline and self-denial enabled him to bear his troubles with a braver front and more excellent wisdom. What I should regret are the few chances for promotion, the indolent life out on the frontier which must kill ambition.”

“I can never consent. O, the little children! How I have enjoyed them. Will ever any time be so happy again when they begin to go out of the old home?”

“When they are married and gone to new interests, and we are but secondary in their lives. When business opportunities call them away,—when we are left together, as we began life years ago, my darling. And if God should spare us to each other shall we not rejoice in duties well done and give thanks for blessed years?”

“You are so large in your thoughts, Bertram; you see so many things——” her voice broke and she put her face close down by his, wet with some tears. Yes, he was the lover of her youth, and they could not be young always. And children had individualities of their own.

CHAPTER XXII.

A BROAD, BRIGHT SPACE.

THERE had been many happy reunions at Sherburne House as is the case frequently with large families with hospitable impulses and affectionate regard. There was always a good time. Judge Beaumanoir's business friends were most enthusiastic about the home delights without the formalisms of society, and yet with charming refinement.

But on grand occasions the borders widened out and took them all in. These were mostly weddings and some notable birthdays. But now it seemed as if half the county insisted upon an interest. Nora Von Lindorm's marriage was still talked about as if no one could get used to the idea of "Miss Milly" having a daughter old enough to be married. And now little Princess Beaumanoir !

The house was like a hotel for guests, as all the children were bidden.

"We should be excellent to go out and settle new countries," said Lyndell, with a bright smile, as she ranged her five in a row, more startled than ever at their rapid increase in size.

Violet Amory put her arm about Lyndell, and the girlish movement took her back years.

"O, do you remember the first evening you came here, Dell?" in a voice of impulsive retrospect. "It seems strange to think of you as a little girl, and of the in-

fluence you have had on all our lives. How far-reaching both good and evil are ! " and she kissed her tenderly.

"Our hearts would faint within us if we did not believe superior wisdom orders that the good should finally prevail, though our finite patience sometimes tires waiting for it. It lies buried deep in many instances, but God shall surely find it."

"If we could have as much faith in the good ! We see the working of evil and accept it with a strange philosophy almost like fatalism. We ought to feel just as certain of the good. And I occasionally think if we were more enthusiastically certain about it, we should help to bring it to pass by our very earnestness. It would inspire others."

"Isn't that the evidence of things unseen ? " and Lyndell smiled.

There were many things to plan about. Uncle Con had obtained steamer tickets and inspected state-rooms, and most of the important baggage was safely stored in the city, so there would be no special confusion at the day of sailing. He had almost a mind to run over himself, he declared, but he had promised to remain and allow two of his compeers a vacation.

"I shall feel so much safer to have you within call," Tessy said. "Not that I anticipate any mishaps, and here is Doctor Underwood at hand. Then you can't imagine what a dependence Sherburne has come to be. And his father is delighted with his change of plans. I fervently hope he will keep to this resolve."

"O, he has a good deal of perseverance when his heart is set on a thing," returned Con, with a rather mystifying gleam in his eye.

Sherburne and his uncle had met with a throng of rela-

tives about them. There had only been opportunity for a cordial hand-shake with a great deal of hearty assurance on the elder's part, and a very scarlet face on the younger's. And Gertrude was behind with some of the family, so that greeting was quietly familiar.

The professor had come with their party. In spite of the many last duties that had crowded in he was looking remarkably well. There had been much common sense counsel on Mrs. Kenneth's part that had rectified some of the careless habits.

"You must remember," she had said, "that the whole duty of marriage is not comprehended in making love and giving your wife a home and support, and expecting her to look after the exquisite minor details that make life run smoothly. She gives you her lovely youth, and though hundreds of men marry with nine or ten years difference in ages, Princess is one of the girls who will keep her youth a long while, and you must not allow yourself to grow old too rapidly."

"I dare say I shall turn into a frisky Benedict, and be younger at thirty than I was at twenty. What a delightful sister you have been to me," he replied, with deep feeling.

There were so many nooks and corners and places that the lovers strayed off unmolested. It was as if their courtship was just beginning. The others were eagerly discussing everything so that no plan should go wrong at the last moment.

The morning dawned radiantly. Sherburne brides always had fine wedding days. That the bride should look lovely in her filmy wedding gown and veil was only natural. There was no real sense of separation, that would not come until she was quite settled to her new

path of life. And since his darling was happy and had a fairly good prospect before her, Judge Beaumanoir gave her to the honorable, refined, and trustworthy gentleman, with the best and truest wishes of a father.

There was a great group of white-robed cherubs, a flock of older girls, and the cousins nearest in age as attendants. All Ardmore said it was the prettiest wedding there had ever been in the old church; and Mr. Armitage confessed it a very proud occasion for himself.

Everybody thronged about, and were full of good wishes and love. The steps and path were thronged with colored people who had strewn the way to the carriage with flowers. The young people were hardly less noticeable, a striking array of cousins, since the families had kept broadening out.

And then there was a delicious sort of confusion, too really joyous to admit of the pang at parting. The house was full of guests. Hospitality and custom counted for more than any society regulations, and seemed natural and beautiful here, the outgrowth of real and tender feeling.

The Carews were to go up to New York, leaving Randolph behind for a summer with the boys. The Draytons with the two children were to remain awhile, but Mr. Mallory's return was urgent, and his wife was not only devoted to him, but to her ailing father-in-law, who adored her and could hardly bear her out of his sight.

Tessy smiled to keep from tears. Of course her first duty was to her husband, but it tore her heart to leave her sweet, merry flock for so long. She had not been abroad since the birth of her last baby, and her jaunt to California had included two of the children.

"O Sherburne," she exclaimed, beseechingly, "you will look after them and see that no evil happens! I shall trust them to you. You have been so tender and thoughtful since papa's illness. It has been such a comfort to me. I think it enabled me to give away Princess with a better grace."

"O mamma, dear, I am glad to have been a comfort to you," and as he gathered her in his arms the tears shone in his eyes. "You may trust them to me, surely. But I shall have so much help that I really will not be able to claim only a little oversight for my part. You and father must feel perfectly at rest, and content."

His father said something of the same thing to him, and added, "I shall take with me the remembrance of all you have been to me the last three months, and the hope of our truer sympathetic relation in the future. It will be the fulfilment of my most earnest desire."

The good-byes were said, and the string of carriages rolled away to the station where many of the Ardmore friends awaited them. The pretty bride waved her hand, though there was a mist of tears in her eyes, but the little mother did not look back. One after another and then the wheels grew fainter and were lost in the distance.

"Well," declared Uncle Con, "we certainly have a good houseful left," and he glanced around with a smiling sort of condolence. "It seems to be a case of the greatest common divisor."

Aunt Julia and Mrs. Kenneth were in a gentle current of reminiscences. Ray and Ruth were very sympathetic "twins," Milly Beaumanoir said, because they had only one syllable in their names and that began with R. Ray had buried her sad episode at Mount Desert out of sight.

and it seemed now like a dream about some other girl, There would always be a memory between her and her father different from that of most parents and children, but they seldom spoke of it, and Aunt Julia had over-lived the pang. God had ended the matter wisely, and they were content to leave it in His hands. There was a peculiar sympathy between these two girls, whose lives had not been unbroken summer.

Gertrude in a fashion seemed to be the head of the house, as no one else was anxious to take charge. She accepted the position with a great deal of tact and un-failing good humor. The big boys hovered about her, Bertram claiming her on account of the old friendship when they had scrambled over rocks, gathered creeping things, run races and helped the children build seashore palaces. Ned Beaumanoir was curiously attracted as well, and his brother, Leonard, declared Mrs. Murray was a trump.

Sherburne experienced a pang of jealousy. That boy-ish foolishness was over, and yet—was it really love? He could recall so many delightful episodes, beginning with that first talk. She was so piquant, she had a way of saying such merry, suggestive things that brought out other people's brightness. And he wanted to be her best friend, her compeer, her chum, if she had been a young fellow.

There was a rather irregular dinner, for everybody was quite demoralized. They drank toasts however, and some bright speeches were made, and good wishes sent after the travelers. Then the children had a romp in everyday attire, in which Aunt Gertie was the moving spirit, and were ready to go to bed when the two elder invalids thought it time to retire.

Ned Beaumanoir walked down the avenue with the two girls, and they talked the marriage over and the courtship that had somehow gone on so unsuspectingly.

"But the professor liked her from the very beginning," declared Ray.

"Of course I didn't see the very beginning," said Ruth, archly, "but they talked of him all the rest of the summer. And he was so fond of talking about her, not in any effusive manner, but saying dainty little things, mentioning those that suggested her. And he has a very lovely, gentle temper, not weak, for I have known him to be quite indignant about some things. He just suits Princess."

Ray gave a little half sigh, remembering those days of semi-illness when he had suited her so delightfully. And she wondered, girl-like, whether there would ever be any one to fill that place in the vague dream that comes in most girls' lives.

"I should like to have the same prospect of happiness when I am eight and twenty," declared Ned. "He is held in high esteem, and Princess may be proud enough when she hears him lecturing to the savants as well as the ordinary people."

"And Princess is prouder of intellectual attainments than she would be of a title."

"It must be delightful to have any one love you that way," said Ned. "It is enough to inspire one. And it is funny, but no one in the faculty, or outside of it fancied Professor Kenneth a marrying man. He took them all by surprise. Of course it would have been different if Princess had been living in the city. After all, a delightful home is the most splendid thing a man can have, and you can't have that without a wife."

Both girls laughed a little, and Ray said he was more than half in love with Princess.

Then they went on discussing marriage and falling in love with the perspicacity of youth and inexperience, and frankly stating likes and dislikes with various bursts of enthusiasm and ideality.

Randolph Carew had taken possession of Uncle Archie. He was not the boy's ideal soldier, and he had vague wonders about him. Had he found the service hard and distasteful?

"Uncle Archie," he began, "did you like West Point? Or did you go because your father wanted you to?"

"From both causes, I think," and the smile that could be felt in his voice gave Randolph a sudden thrill. "You see I was the son of a very enthusiastic soldier, whose regard for his country had been fostered by helping to save it from anarchy. There never was any idea but that I should go to West Point. I never thought of anything else."

"But if he had not wanted you to go?"

"I can't imagine that. He must have had some different profession."

"And you liked it?" the boy assumed.

"Yes. I liked the spirit and enthusiasm. We were all alive with it in those days. The training is pretty severe, and boys who have a delightful home and an abundance of indulgent love might get rather down-hearted longing for it. I had been away at school, and—well, my lad, even a peace soldier's life has a great many hardships in it."

"Would you do it over again?"

"Why, yes, my boy, though under the circumstances

there would be no other course to follow for me. Circumstances carry great weight and when one's fancies run in the same direction it is easy to decide. I was proud of my father. He was a fine, courageous soldier, who had done his duty nobly, and I wanted to be one."

"And my father is a splendid man and is doing his duty nobly. Saving lives and caring for poor bodies is a grand work. I am very proud of him and the fame he has won. And yet I want to go to West Point and have a soldier's training. There is something so inspiring in it."

"Ah, the desire lies that way, does it?" Uncle Archie drew the lad more tenderly to him. Ah, if he had such a son! If Ray had brothers he could train and be proud of, and the great want and sorrow of his life came to him more forcibly than it had in years. It had been hard to suffer for boyish generosity and inexperience. "And your father objects?" he suggested after a pause.

"I think papa would consent. You see there is a whole year before I could go. But mamma would take it very hard."

"And you may change your mind." That was what the others had said. "You know, I suppose, that if you accept the proffer of the country for four years of training, you owe her in return some years of service. There is nothing very exhilarating about it now. We may never have another war—I pray God we may not. Then there is only frontier and fort duty, and an occasional skirmish with the Indians. Promotions are slow."

"I want the training, the sort of *esprit du corps*," said the boy, spiritedly. "I do not want to study medicine. If I can't do that, I shall choose civil engineering."

"Then the military training would stand you in good stead, if you took that up afterward."

Uncle Archie wondered if he had any right to encourage the boy. Ah, if he were his, what pride he would take in him. Something about him suggested his own youth and all his high hopes.

"Uncle Archie," the lad's tone dropped to a lower, hesitating key, "if you liked it so much, how could you bear to give it up?"

"There is a story connected with it, Randolph, that you are too young to understand." The man's tone was soft, regretful, tender, and the boy clung closer to him. "Some day, if you are a soldier, I will tell it over to you, and you will see that I could not well have done differently and kept my manliness. It was a great cross to me. But I learned through it more about that other spiritual warfare. I was not less a soldier because I did not live in a tent or fort, and there were other enemies to conquer. But my heart is still in the service. And if the country had need of me, now that the other duty is ended, I should go at once."

They walked on in silence for some time.

"I wish you'd tell me something about the life. We drill at the institute and we have a few military regulations."

The boy listened with avidity. True, he was young and might outgrow his fancy, but if Uncle Archie had seen the fire in his eyes and the flush coming and going on his cheek, he could have discerned the true soldier enthusiasm that would never be quenched, even if relinquished. The Carews had another boy—why not allow this one to follow his bent. His own mother had not objected, he remembered, but she had been a soldier's wife.

Bertram took possession of Gertrude. Sherburne was annoyed. He had resolved on a good long explanatory talk, but rack his brains as he might, he could find no reasonable excuse for detaching the younger. So he and Uncle Con sat on the step and talked over his plans. The warm approval soothed his restlessness, and the keen interest, the certainty Uncle Con felt of his succeeding and reaching a high place, if he resolved in earnest and worked to this end, cheered and inspirited him.

What a magnificent night it was. The wind had blown up much cooler, and the stars shone with unwonted brilliancy. Two or three birds were answering each other at intervals and between the sweet silences a sort of heavenly charm brooded over all.

It was late when they said good-night. But coming down the next morning Sherburne found Gertrude alone, cutting some roses to adorn the breakfast-table.

"I am early," she said, half in apology. "Con had to do a little writing, and it was so lovely out here. O, I can understand how all you people just adore Sherburne House! I almost wonder how Princess could waive her right in such a home. I should have wanted to sink gently and resignedly into old maidenhood, and wander about these mysterious shades forever."

"Well—" almost moodily, "it might have been yours. It is to be mine some day."

"Sherburne!" with a note of warning.

"I am glad it didn't tempt you. No, I am not going to sink into bathos, but since I've made up with Uncle Con, and know him for the splendid, large-hearted and generous fellow that he is, I must make my apology to you. I shall feel more manly and have a greater respect for myself when it is done. I think it was a sort of

mid-winter madness—is there such a thing? For I shall have to admit that I was lost alike to honor and truth. My accusations were monstrous! I can understand how a girl could love Uncle Con without a thought of his money, and he *is* worthy of the best love a woman has. And looking at it in a calmer light, you did not promise me anything. It was my overweening vanity that led me to think I could win you against the charm and experience of a man of the world ——”

“And whom I had loved unconsciously, without hope, but quite enough to keep me from loving any other man,” she interrupted.

“I did repeat my angry impressions to Princess, but I am glad that I did not influence her. She was too far gone in love’s net, and I am thankful I was not fool enough to bruit it any farther abroad. And now I want you to forgive all the wild, unreasonable and untrue language I used, and give me a chance to reinstate myself in your esteem. Then I shall ask for your friendship.”

“O Sherburne, you have our friendship, his and mine. He was quite vexed once, but soon saw the matter in its true light. I hope you will not be any worse for the experience, nor lose faith in women,” pausing while a smile irradiated her eyes and hovered about her lips. “Some day you will know what real love is!”

He thought he knew now. He was secretly mortified that no one would take his love in earnest. Perhaps he had not deserved that it should be respected.

“So we will dismiss the subject,” she resumed. “We are all sorry it happened, and I am doubly sorry that any carelessness on my part should have led you on. I did try several times to disabuse you, but I was not sure your fancy had any depth. And now I am going to give you

a rose in token of amity, one of your own Sherburne roses."

She pinned a dainty opening bud in his coat. He wanted to kiss her hand—the children had fallen into the habit of kissing her, even Bertram, but a feeling of respect restrained him.

Then she turned and went in with her airy, graceful step. Yes, he loved her still, but he accepted the decrees of fate.

She made the way easy for him with a charming friendliness. There was no one among the girls quite like her. And he wondered whether Uncle Con really appreciated the prize he had gained.

It was too warm for much pleasuring except the early morning drive, and the late afternoon when the wind blew up and gave them lovely evenings. They heard from the party, a telegram from papa, to say the whole colony were on board and the tide would be right in two hours, and that he should expect them to send letters by the next steamer.

Then Uncle Con had to go up to the city. They besought him to let Gertrude stay, but he pictured his solitariness in such heartrending terms, and his utter inability to even cook an egg or toast a piece of bread, and he knew the baker would charge him ten cents for a five cent loaf, and the butcher cheat him, and the candlestick maker refuse him any light.

"But you burn gas," said small Lawrence. "And isn't there any cook? Why, we could lend you one."

"Well, really, to tell you the truth I am afraid you will eat up Aunt Gertrude if I leave her behind. She's awfully sweet." They all promised solemnly that they would not, but he could not be convinced.

Mrs. Stanwood was going up to the city to visit at the charming rectory on Long Island, with its host of attractive grandchildren, and the pretty rural home of her son, Winthrop, in which there was only baby Julia. Uncle Con was willing to take charge of her, as Archie's week of leave had expired and he was due at the office. They begged so for Mrs. Kenneth to stay that she finally assented.

And then came the first batch of letters from the travelers, written mostly on shipboard. The passage had proved delightful with only one stormy day and that not very severe. Mamma had been very sick two days, Princess only slightly so, the professor not at all, and papa not very brilliant for several days, but not really ill. They would have a week or two in London and then go to Germany, with the Amorys.

There was almost a holiday with the children. They ran free in the morning, often driving over to Beaumanoir or to Aunt Fanny's. Afterward two hours in the large airy schoolroom, then music and play or any reading they chose. Della, as they called her, had developed a decided talent for sketching and was very fond of it. Milly had a very sweet voice and went caroling about the place like a bird. The governess and Ruth Ensign fraternized most agreeably.

The boys soon grew as fond of Mrs. Kenneth as the girls had been, and she was quite charmed and entertained with the diversity of character. Bertram and Randolph were great chums, and though the latter was not an enthusiastic naturalist, he was very good-humored and often assisted with specimens.

Ned and Sherburne grew into a delightful friendship. It had begun during the last year in Germany, but lan-

guished through the winter. Now they had renewed it and were taking much interest in each other's plans, growing into almost brotherly accord. Ned was very generous in his admiration of his handsome, and really brilliant cousin. They went up to Washington together for a few days, and Ned was pleased with the verdict of the legal firm with which his uncle was connected.

"I really do not see why you should have taken a fancy to medicine when the advantages of the law were right before you," he said, rather wonderingly to Sherburne.

"I think it queer, now," and the other laughed, lightly. "I'd had a fancy all along that law was dull and prosy and had no really fine points in it; that its practice was rather corrupting to one's moral tone."

"It hasn't corrupted your father very much. I think Uncle Len a really splendid man."

"He is all that," returned his son, warmly. "I suppose children always love an indulgent father, but it takes experience and a certain knowledge to truly appreciate. To tell the truth his illness roused a new feeling within me. Not altogether the sense of passionate despair at the prospect of his loss, but a realization of what he was to mamma and all of us, and a sense of my own duty as a son. I had been a careless sort of fellow, taking things largely for granted, and not considering my share in the responsibility, ready to receive but not very ready to give except for my own pleasure. And now it looks different to me. Life is a greater gift than I have heretofore considered it. I want to make a wise use of it. And I must begin at home."

Ned was studying him with earnest, admiring eyes.

"Yes," he returned, thoughtfully. "We are building

now for all the rest of life, for another world as well. I can't believe that all the knowledge garnered here will drop out or be of no account in another world. Whatever elevates the human mind, every noble deed, every kindly and generous one, must reach up to the divine life. But if it was only in this life it would be a better thing to strive for the upbuilding of those around us, than to be indifferent to our fellow-creatures."

"And to those who love us," Sherburne said, softly. He was indeed trying. And it was strange to him to discern so much sweetness in the common duties, to experience a new satisfaction in studying the wants and pleasures of the household, and ministering to them. It was not always agreeable to put up his book and take an interest in Bertram's doings, or allow Larry to cling to him and listen to childish wants and pleasures. But he had accepted the more serious aspect of life and this was part of the discipline.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LESSONS OF LIFE.

“**N**O, you cannot go with us, Larry. That is the last word. There is no use teasing.”

“You’re a mean old thing, Sher Beaumanoir!” and the child gave a vicious kick in the gravel path, sending the dust flying. “I can’t stay home all alone. Bert’s going.”

“But Bertram is a big fellow and can walk miles and miles. You would get tired to death. Besides, as I said, it would be no real fun to you.”

Sherburne was provoked at himself for reiterating reasons when he had said he would not. He turned away, but his little brother made a sudden spring and twined his arms so tightly about the elder’s limbs that it nearly toppled him over.

“Lawrence!” The tone was stern now as he undid the small clinging hands. “I shall shut you up in the schoolroom for the next hour.”

Larry began to struggle and cry.

“But I am all alone, and what can I do? There’s no one to play with!”

“You can go down to Aunt Fanny’s. All the girls are there.”

“I don’t want to play with girls.”

“But there’s Phil and Cecil.”

“Them little shavers!” with the most sublime disdain, and utter disregard of his pronoun. Sherburne could not help smiling at the air.

"Then go over to grandpapa's. He will be glad to see you."

"I don't want to," sullenly.

"Well—shall I shut you up in the schoolroom?"

"You're just mean and hateful! And I'll tell papa you wouldn't do anything for me, but just went off to have fun all the time."

"That would not be true, Larry, and I think you love papa too well to tell him a falsehood, even if you do not love me."

"No, I don't love you one bit."

The cherry lips were set firmly and the eyes had a lowering expression. Sherburne had grown really fond of his little brother, who was bright, smart and amusing, but wilful.

"I am dreadfully sorry about that." There was no use talking to the child when you could make no impression upon him. So he turned away, hating to leave him alone, but there was nothing else in the child's present mood.

The others were coming around. Jasper, a young colored factotum, had a hamper and some fishing tackle; Bertram had two nets and a box slung over his shoulder.

Larry started off presently. He could run like a deer, and in a few moments had disappeared.

It was a half cloudy morning, not at all prefiguring rain, but with a soft, grey under-roof of cloud that moved about, Ned said, "like a spirit on the face of the waters." So after a little they were ready to start on their day's outing. Ned had a book under his arm, he was rarely without one. Randolph looked eager for enjoyment, he was getting to be quite a country boy, but he couldn't understand Bertram's interest in "bugs and things," and his

delight was to have Sherburne declaim from the Latin orations, or repeat striking passages of the Greek poets.

Lawrence was not in sight. After giving some directions to Maum Chloe, since the governess had gone home on a vacation, and feeling confident the child would finally go to Aunt Fanny's, they took up their line of march.

They had gone a mile perhaps when Bertram made a plunge in a wayside thicket to capture a moth. There was a trodden path much frequented by the negroes as a short cut, coming out on the road.

"Hillo!" he exclaimed.

Lawrence gave a short, triumphant laugh and looked the very picture of elation.

"I can walk well enough," he began. "I've walked miles and miles, and I can go along just as well as not."

"O Lawrence," said Ned, persuasively, "you would get tired to death. And there is nothing to amuse a little boy. See here, to-morrow we'll drive over to Mason's creek, and you shall row the boat."

Sherburne was vexed at the evasion. He seized his little brother by the arm and drew him out in the road.

"Go on, boys," he said, turning the child around and walking back rapidly. Lawrence gave a sulky kick but missed his brother's leg, and though he tried to lag, the elder hurried him along by his superior strength.

"Where are you going?" he asked, curiosity as to his fate getting the better of him.

"I am going back home with you and shall lock you up in the schoolroom," said the elder, resolutely.

"I will climb out of the window," defiantly.

"I'll put old Crissy in to watch you."

Old Crissy was a sharp negress, big and strong, and

handy with a strap, and was famous for keeping the younger generation of darkies in order.

"She wouldn't dare strike me. I'd just write to papa——"

"You deserve a thrashing, you little rascal! But if she didn't thrash you she could keep you from climbing out of the window."

That was true enough. Larry's dark eyes blazed at being outgeneraled. "I just hate you!" he cried, with anger.

Sherburne made no reply but hurried on. To be shut up with old Crissy did not look inviting, and the child began to consider.

"See here, Sher," he cried, at length, still in a furious temper, "don't have me locked up! I won't follow you, honest and true. I'll—I'll stay. But I don't want—to be locked up,"—crying in good earnest.

Sherburne paid no attention.

"O Sher, please don't," he entreated. "I won't do anything but just play round, unless I go to Aunt Fanny's. Yes, I'll go there."

"Will you, truly?" Sherburne stopped and looked his little brother over with much severity in his aspect.

"Yes, I will—I just will," he pleaded.

"Very well, then. And if you shouldn't, Larry, I'll punish you severely myself, to-morrow—do you hear?"

The boy nodded. Sherburne released his arm, and watched him a moment as he trudged on slowly without glancing around.

"Be a good boy," he sang out, resuming his own journey.

They had a grand day fishing, lying about in the shade arguing several points which led to a rather heated

interest, but no anger. Bertram captured a number of new specimens. Never had lunch tasted better, and never had there been a finer day for their purpose. They took a nap on the bed of dry pine needles, and then, refreshed, started slowly homeward. Ned was enjoying life as he never had before, "crawling out of his shell," Sherburne told him.

"Sher, you will make a great success in life, I know. You inspire people. I never gave you credit for half your virtues. I used to think it a great pity you were so pleasure-loving, but there is a good deal beside that in you, and you make the pleasures exhilarating and attractive. All work and no play does make Jack a dull boy. I've found out that."

"Thank you," and Sherburne laughed joyously. "You see I always acquired everything easily and had lots of time to spend in fooling, and I suppose it *did* give me the appearance of a careless fellow. And now I am in real earnest, but I can't turn hermit for all that. I shall always like a bit of fun."

The girls had taken supper at Aunt Fanny's, and were sitting on the steps, but they sprang up and greeted the boys with a glad shout.

"We're so lonesome! O Sher, don't you wish Ruth and Ray were back here, and Mrs. Kenneth, to tell us stories? We've sat here and watched and watched."

Sherburne laughed as he kissed both girls.

"O Sher," cried Milly, "wouldn't it be just awful to be orphans and have no father or mother! To be sure, Ruth hasn't any, but she has Mrs. Kenneth, and Ray has Aunt Julia——"

Yes, they did miss the heads of the household very much.

"Where is the little lad?" he asked.

"O, didn't he go with you?" returned Millicent. "He did not come over to Aunt Fanny's and the boys were so sorry."

Sherburne started. Perhaps he had gone to grand-papa's, where he was a great favorite. Supper was all ready, and they were hungry as bears. But the elder brother rose when the serving was done.

"Brad," he said to the black boy, "get out one of the horses and go over to Beaumanoir. If Larry is all right and wants to stay, let him. But I'd like to know."

"Yes, Mas'r."

They went on with their supper. Sherburne felt strangely annoyed and a little apprehensive. And he was startled when Brad came tearing back.

"He ain't bin dar, Mas'r Sherburne. W'y we all tought he gone wid you. Where d' s'pose he be? Juno, she been whinin' round."

"What is it?" asked Ned. "Larry? He must have wandered off somewhere."

"Dat boy know ebery inch er groun' fer miles an' miles. But he's awful reckless."

"Get out the dogs and the lanterns. Let us go at once and hunt him up," exclaimed Sherburne in alarm.

Juno whined and sprang from one to the other. Cæsar was quieter, but moved his tail with a dawning sense of responsibility. They rushed on ahead and were soon lost to sight as well as sound.

"Something has happened to him," began Bertram, gravely. "He wouldn't have stayed out in the woods all day with nothing to eat."

"He could have gone in some cabin. It wouldn't have been the first time."

"We have spoiled him some way," subjoined Bertram, seriously. "He won't mind one of us, and he always did obey mamma."

Sherburne felt quite helpless on the subject of parental authority. The Beaumanoirs had been trained in truth-telling and promise-keeping, and Lawrence had said "Honest and true."

They went stumbling on, calling now and then to the boy and to the dogs. They heard an occasional bay. Should they take this path or that? They had no heart for any but the briefest sentences.

Then Cæsar came rushing with a swish through the darkness. Bertram held up the lantern and the eager fiery eyes blinked.

"Good dog, good Cæsar, what is it?"

He ran a few steps, barking loudly, then turned wistfully and ran on again. They followed rapidly on through the woods that had been partly cleared.

Juno was keeping watch over something and gave low, melancholy howls. When they reached the spot Sherburne stooped and picked up his little brother, pallid and cold.

"O, he isn't dead!" cried Bertram.

"Let us get back as quickly as possible." Then he tried to think what would be best. "Brad, run on ahead and get out the big carriage. Come down the road and meet us. We had better get over to Doctor Underwood's with all speed."

"Let me carry him," said Ned, presently. "You are tired and we can get along faster."

It was true. Sherburne settled the limp body on his cousin's shoulder, and they almost ran. The carriage was waiting.

"We shall not all be needed," exclaimed Sherburne. "Bert, you and Randolph go home and comfort the girls. We will send Brad back with a message as soon as there is any word."

The boys went reluctantly. The others entered the carriage with their burthen, and drove swiftly to their haven.

"O," cried Aunt Fanny, "the doctor went to the hospital not more than ten minutes ago. Little Larry—what could have happened! Drive right over. He has a rather serious case and will be gone half an hour or so. Yes, go at once."

In five minutes they were there and Doctor Underwood had taken the apparently lifeless body to one of the wards. Miss Eunis came and disrobed it. There was a broken leg, how much more they could not tell, or whether, at first, there was any life left in him. Sherburne paced up and down in a state of agonizing apprehension. Ned knew any attempt at comfort was useless and wisely kept quiet.

It seemed hours before Doctor Underwood came in, with a grave face.

"He is not dead," he said, but from present indications he has been unconscious a long while. He has a broken leg, a very clean break, which will cause no trouble and it is set. Tell me how it happened."

Sherburne repeated the day's events in a rather unsteady tone.

"Well—I don't see that you were to blame," announced his uncle, anxious to relieve the dreadful sense of responsibility he read in the young face. "May be it would have been better if you had switched him all the way home. Boys are trying conglomerates. Now—both

of you get back to Sherburne House as soon as you can. Stop and tell Aunt Fanny I shall stay here all night. Try and get some sleep. You can't help nor hinder."

"But—" began Sherburne, eagerly.

"You can't do me an atom of good; you will only be a bother. Come over as soon as you like in the morning. Meanwhile—don't do anything until we know what we have to do."

"Not send for——"

"He will be dead or better before Carew could get here," said the doctor, testily. "And your father and mother can't fly over. I am capable of doing all that can be done, and I have trained watchers and helpers. There—go. I can't spend any more time talking."

Thus dismissed in Doctor Underwood's peremptory fashion, they returned to the carriage. Aunt Fanny was more amenable and sympathized warmly with them.

"If anything can be done the doctor is equal to it," said she, with wifely pride and confidence.

But if nothing could be done !

They drove silently homeward. It was past midnight. The girls had gone to bed and cried themselves to sleep in awesome terror. The boys still sat on the porch, and had no heart to retire.

He could have prevented all this by taking the child with him. It would have been a nuisance, of course, for all of them would have had to give up a little of their enjoyment for his entertainment, and already Sherburne had devoted days to the children's pleasure. Inexperience could not tell when to indulge and when to deny like wise motherhood. But would not the days and nights of anxiety more than counterbalance the one day's gratification ? It was a grave question.

There was little sleep for him. Soon after dawn he mounted his horse and almost flew over to the pretty hospital, which was the fruition of many years' dreaming on the part of its founder.

Doctor Underwood had been lying half asleep on a couch. The horse's gallop startled him. He ruffled up his hair with his hands and came out.

"You're early," in a brief, almost curt tone.

"I wanted to know ——"

"There isn't anything to know. I am not omniscient. The child breathes slowly, and is unconscious. He may lie this way for days. We shall do our best and hope."

"Then you do think——" in a glad, relieved tone.

"I do not think at all except to do what is best. I simply hope that all will go well, since he was not dead last night. Children have wonderful recuperative powers, and nature understands her work pretty well."

"Ought I to send—to papa?"

"No, Sherburne, I am going to take this responsibility. You could not do any good by sending for them. Before they could get here the child would be dead or on the mend. Your father is improving rapidly, and will be better during the next ten years for this chance of relaxation. Your mother needed it as well. Now let them enjoy it. If they have to sup sorrow, let it be at the very last, when the thing is inevitable."

"But if they should blame me— O, I know mamma would, if I kept it from her until it was too late."

"Don't you see it would be too late anyhow?" said the doctor, in a tone of irritation. "Ten days or a fortnight! And to give them such a shock if it turns out to be needless! No, take my advice."

"And I could have helped it all ! If I had taken him with me !"

"Sherburne, don't be such a girl !" cried the other, testily. "Girls and women are always bemoaning if they had done this or that, and seeing a hundred things that after all would not have amounted to a row of crooked pins. When a thing is done, why it is done. All the bewailing can't alter. We may learn some wisdom for the future. But do you think you or any one can watch Lawrence every moment of his life until he reaches manhood ? Were you watched that way ?"

No, it would not be possible.

"You four fellows had the right to go off pleasuring for a day. I can't see but that you took every precaution with Larry. He promised to go back to the house, and he did not. Even if you had gone to the porch with him he might have strayed off afterward. These are the things we have to leave to an overruling Providence. There was a moment of carelessness on the child's part, and God did not work a special miracle at that moment. I don't know as we could demand it, though I think He does often interpose, and we scarcely remark it. Don't be so strenuous and self-accusing, but just go on and leave it in God's hands."

"You are very comforting," Sherburne said, brokenly.

"Then take my advice and act upon it, and go about your business as if you had some faith in me, and in the overruling Power. Let us wait a few days and see."

"Could I just take one glimpse of him," Sherburne asked, tremulously.

"O yes. What a reviving air there is this morning. It makes one wish the morning and evening could be all there was of the day. Yes, come in."

Lawrence lay on the white cot as if he were already dead. How beautiful he was, like a bit of sculptured marble. The golden brown curls were soft and shining, the brows perfect in their penciling, the long bronze lashes making shadows on the white cheeks, the lips sweet and smiling, and one might have thought the child asleep but for the deadly pallor. Sherburne wondered at his beauty as if he had never seen it before.

"Thank you," he said, softly, but his eyes were full of tears. "And for all your care——"

"That's my business," was the curt reply.

The household were bitterly disappointed that he did not bring hope, and the servants lamented as if the child was already dead.

But there were letters from abroad. One to Della from Princess, who seemed to be having a very grand time in London, and whose vivid descriptions made it almost as good as seeing for one's self. And mamma's lovely letter that came in nearly every steamer.

Both girls promised solemnly not to say a word about Larry in their replies. But the zest had gone out of the household. They lounged around and read a little, and the piano was untouched, the merry voices no longer rang in song or jest.

"If he was only here where we could see him," moaned Milly. "But uncle doctor is very cross about it. O Sherburne, tell us again how he looked. Can't he speak or anything?"

Several times a day they heard. The word was always the same—no change.

And yet the duties of life went on. Sherburne discussed with Ned the two offers the latter had, one at a western college, the other in New York at a little less salary.

"But you see I could do considerable beside in the city. There are always students to coach, and one can get up classes in language. And this year I do mean to be a little more social. Aunt Millicent's home is so charming. And do you know those evenings at Mrs. Townsend's were just fascinating. I didn't go to many of them, but I enjoyed them very much. And your Uncle Con and his bright agreeable wife. Yes, I think I prefer the city."

"O do stay," rejoined Sherburne. "Not that I shall be there, but you seem nearer. And now that we have begun such a good, solid friendship, we ought to go on."

"And I can run down to Washington now and then. Well, I will write and give up the western proffer."

Randolph Carew found a great deal to entertain himself with. He liked Mr. Armitage and he used to haunt the old house. The neighborhood about Ardmore related incidents concerning his grandfather. He became interested in the hospital, and he found a youngish man who had served in the frontier army under General Custer, and though lame and an invalid, was still full of the fire and the spirit of military life.

Sherburne went to church on Sunday and joined heartily in the prayer for the sick child. How sweet, solemn and near it seemed! "Like as a father pitieth his children." He could just see how his own father would gather Lawrence in his arms.

They were all to go to Beaumanoir to dine with grandpapa. Doctor Underwood's man touched Sherburne on the arm as he was coming out and said,

"If you please sah, the doctor want you at de hospital."

Sherburne went with a heart full of fear, but the first glance at the doctor's face reassured him.

"He has spoken," the elder man said, in a tone he strove to make as commonplace as possible. "He has asked for you. I want you to sit here by him until he wakes again, then look at him steadily, and answer, but do not touch him or agitate him in any way."

Sherburne was struck with the positive improvement. The child was still pale but it was not the deathlike pallor, and there was a shade of color in his lips while his breathing was perceptible.

Sitting there, Sherburne almost went back to his fancy for medicine. A physician seemed to him the incarnation of power and skill and patience. He thought too, of his father, and those hours of agonized watching.

The boy stirred and opened his eyes. Sherburne had much ado not to clasp him in his arms. So long and steadily he looked the elder began almost to fear.

"Sherburne—" how weak and tremulous the little voice was. "I want to tell you—I forget—I'm so tired."

Then he dropped asleep again.

Sherburne told this over to his uncle and pleaded to remain.

"Go to Aunt Fanny's and get some dinner, then you may stay all the afternoon."

Sherburne could only press his hand.

Dr. Underwood felt for the thread of a pulse, and looking at the small face was not at all sure the danger line had passed.

Sherburne resumed his watching presently. He had Keeble's *Lyra Innocentium* in his pocket, Princess' favorite, and he had picked it up from her table that morning. How many beautiful hymns there were!

Lawrence did not speak again. Several times he moved uneasily and sighed, and at dusk the doctor dismissed the elder. But he could not help a light and hopeful feeling pervading his very soul.

The next morning there was an improvement. And now he wanted Sherburne again, and a faint gleam of pleasure shone in the eyes so like his mother's.

"Sherburne," he said, a day or two after, "won't you take me in your strong arms? I'm so tired lying here."

"Lift him carefully," subjoined Doctor Underwood.

The arms were clasped about his neck and the head dropped on his shoulder with a contented sigh. The strong arms held him firmly, gently.

"What is the matter with my leg? It's so stiff."

It was in the plaster cast. "You have broken it, dear," said the voice, gently.

"O, is that it? I can't seem to think——"

"Never mind. Do not bother about thinking. You can do that when you get well."

"Can't you take me home?" in a whisper.

"Not until your leg gets well. Uncle doctor has to care for it."

"O—next week, perhaps."

"Yes, perhaps then."

After a while he begged to be laid down again, and then to be read to, and went fast asleep.

Ned thought it his duty to go to Baltimore and visit his father and took advantage of Sherburne being thus occupied. There was a reasonable hope that Lawrence would pull through with careful treatment, but he had not begun to remember much of anything. If there were no internal injuries and his brain was all right—serious provisos.

Princess and her husband had gone over to Paris where they met Mr. and Mrs. Phillips, and were coming home together, would reach New York early in September. The judge and his wife would be home a week or ten days afterward, and the Amory party not until October. Then Randolph was sent for and the two boys looked forward to the renewal of friendship a few weeks later. The governess returned to Sherburne House, and though actual lessons did not begin, the girls were glad to have her for company. Laura Underwood was to study with them this winter.

Sherburne spent a good part of every day in the hospital. There was a young medical student, a male nurse, Miss Eunis and a young colored girl she had in training. He began to like Miss Eunis very much. She was two or three and thirty, and knew almost as much as a doctor.

"Indeed," she said, "if Doctor Underwood gave up the hospital, I should go to New York and study for a degree, though I like the nursing best."

He was very much startled to learn from her that there had been grave doubts as to the little boy's entire recovery. The doctor had been afraid of some injury to the brain with the serious concussion.

"Sher," he began, one day when he was lying in his brother's arms, and the familiar abbreviation sounded so good, "Sher, what happened? How did my leg get broken. I can't seem to get things straight."

"We think you must have fallen from a tree. You were coming home you know. You wanted to go with us big fellows ——"

Larry drew a long breath and the color fluttered over his pale face. Then after a long silence ——

"Yes, I remember now. I—oh, Sher, I didn't come home—not right away. But I didn't mean to go back. I promised you. And I did climb up a tree. I was tired and hungry and it was so warm. And I suppose I fell out. How did you find me?"

Sherburne related the story. "You see if we could have found you right away it would not have been so bad."

"And if you had not found me at all! O Sher!" He crept closer and put his soft little hand under his brother's chin with a caressing movement. "If I had stayed out there all night would I have been dead by morning? And then I never could have seen mamma again, nor,—nor any one."

The child began to cry softly.

"O, Juno would have found you," said Sherburne, in a comforting tone.

There was another long silence.

"Sher," in a tremulous whisper, "I was very bad that day—wasn't I?"

"Rather," but the tone had a smile in it as well as the face.

"Very bad. And I suppose God let me break my leg to make me remember that when one promises to do a thing, they must do it at once. That is what papa says. Was it long ago?"

"Three weeks."

"And how many weeks before I will be well?"

"About three more."

"Sher—I'm awful sorry. You oughtn't be so good to me."

"Yes, I ought to be good to you. I am the oldest and the wisest, I hope. And I ought to set you an example, so that you will be kind and true and ——"

“And obedient. O what did papa say?”

“Papa doesn't know. We didn't want to spoil their delightful journey.”

“Sherburne,” in a soft, solemn tone, “I think I will never be so naughty to you again. Will you please forgive me and let me try?”

The big boy and the little boy sealed their contract with a kiss.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN THE OLD HOUSE.

WHAT a year it had been for Sherburne Beaumanoir ! It came over him this September evening as he sat on the porch with the cablegram in his hand that said the travelers had just started and that the professor and Mrs. Kenneth would be in shortly. Ned had begged that Bertram and the two girls would come to Baltimore for a week. His stepmother would be glad to see them and give them a warm welcome.

Then Lawrence had come home amid enthusiastic greetings, almost as if he had been raised from the dead. He was allowed to walk with a crutch and was a very happy boy. His memory had returned and there was no fear of any brain trouble, but his back seemed a little weak, and the doctor advised carefulness for some time to come. He had always adored his big brother, as small boys are apt to do, but there was a new tenderness between them, and the elder brother was realizing more thoroughly all that that term meant.

Doctor Underwood was very proud of his success. Sherburne said laughingly one day, "that he was almost persuaded back to medicine again ; it had such large possibilities."

"No, don't," returned the doctor. "It would be a lifelong disappointment to you father."

He wondered sometimes if he had any mind at all ! He had wavered so between the two, he had been crazily

in love with Gertrude Maurice when he might have seen from the very beginning that it was unwise, and that she had only a friendly regard for him. He was humiliated by his own folly and self-love.

And yet the gold came out of the mines in a crude state and this mineral and that had to be separated from it by different processes and the dross purged from it, and presently you came to the true and perfect material. It was not all at once. He must have needed the discipline to draw away the dross and foolishness.

He would not disappoint his father. In fact he had been doing some good solid reading this summer, and he would go in the office in the fall and try his very best. He had never tried much in any respect, things had come so easy to him. If where much was given much was to be required, he needed to bestir himself.

For some days Lawrence had been his only companion. It touched him to see the child make his small efforts at self-control, and not interrupt him when he was busy, and wait patiently until he was at liberty. It was really very sweet and touching. He had often delighted in teasing the small boy to see him fly in a temper, but he had come to care too much for him. And when he held Lawrence in his arms as he did now for an hour or two before bedtime, enjoying the fragrant out of doors and listening to the myriads of insects, sometimes singing a little song himself, the child would say as he clung to him.

“O, how awful sweet you are, Sherburne.”

Then there was Bertram to whom he could be an elder brother, steady, studious Bertram who would not be likely to rush into vagaries as he had done, but who might enjoy sympathy, affection and sometimes counsel. And

there was the sonship, the duties to his parents, the love for their declining years when it came to that. Yes there was plenty of real work in the world, and now he felt glad and eager to take up his share.

The children had a delightful visit. Why they never knew Uncle Edward was so nice, only he wasn't funny and bright like papa, and Aunt Bessy was just splendid! Cousin Ned and Len had taken them everywhere, and it had all been just wonderful.

But the most magnificent thing of all would be to go up to New York and meet the travelers and escort them home. Sherburne thought they could go, and Bertram must to enter his classes. So Sherburne telegraphed the plan to the Kenneths that they might not come down and miss everybody.

Aunt Millicent took them in. Hope was a big girl already, and Carew measured every month to see how much he gained on papa. Margaret Phillips and her husband, Mrs. Kenneth and Ruth had gone to the new home and had already welcomed the professor and his wife, much to the dissatisfaction of Uncle Con.

Margaret said her uncle had grown really stout and handsome, but that it was quite ridiculous to think of calling Princess aunt, when she was years the oldest. Princess had gained a curious bit of dignity that was very becoming, and she looked so quaintly pretty in her Paris gowns, that had been fitted to her style, rather than transforming her to some other style and destroying her individuality.

There had been one amusing attempt at changing her name. Now that she was married they thought it would be a good time to begin calling her Aurelia. But the professor forgot and made such funny work of it, and she

was so amazed that she couldn't remember, so one day when they both laughed at the blunder, he kissed her and said —

“My darling, it was the name I first knew you by, and you have always been my princess. A queen would have been too grand for me, but I dared to aspire to the next round of royalty. And so we will go back to the dear name that suits you so well.”

“And there is no confusion to it,” returned Princess, merrily. “There are so many Millys and Dells and Violets.”

“And only one Princess, my Princess.”

They had done a good deal of love making on their wedding journey to make up for the lack of it beforehand.

Mrs. Kenneth declared that she was one of the happiest women in the world with three girls that she could claim as her very own.

And Larry found that his broken leg made him quite a hero. They did not tell the saddest side of the accident.

As for the Carews they had all come home well and happy. New York was busy and bustling, and work had begun in earnest. Boys and girls were off at school, and there were the duties of another year stretching out before them.

Judge Beaumanoir returned in the best of health and spirits, quite eager for the coming opportunities. He was beginning to show the advance of middle life, but it was dignified, and brought the aspect of ripened experience. He thought of all the joys of home-coming, the keenest was to clasp his son's hand with an understanding of what they were to be to each other in the years that were to unfold.

The Carews insisted upon entertaining them for the few days of their stay, and the children had a fine time together.

"After all," said Dell to her husband, "we must just trust that Randolph will get over his fancy for West Point. We must make other pursuits attractive to him. When he is as old as Sherburne ——"

"And Sherburne was very trying last year. I did feel quite discouraged with him. Of course the foolishness about Gertrude had some weight. What a fine thing for him that she really was in love with some one else. My dear, what are you sighing about?"

"Love-making and all that. Getting children settled in the right groove in life. And then—O Bertram, their going out of your life!"

"My darling, we will not meet trouble half-way. There are years first."

The three mothers had delightful talks about old times. How old, indeed, they seemed when Tessy was a young girl gathering the sweetness of common daily living; Millicent almost surprised at her own success in literature, Lyndell eager, strenuous, longing for her part in the great world. And now it was living anew in their children's lives.

"The next great family event," said the Judge, "will be Sherburne's coming of age. You know Dell you desired the name to be perpetuated. So do I. I am proud of it, and there should always be Sherburnes in the old house where they have reigned for nearly two centuries. My plan is for him to take the name legally. In my old age I shall go back to Beaumanoir, for that is still dear to me. Sherburne will marry some time, and I hope he and his will love the old home as we have all loved it.

So we must gather in all the clan on this occasion, small and great. There have been so few breaks in it, but we cannot hope to have it go on that way many years longer."

"That will be a delightful reunion," returned Doctor Carew. "Yes, we will come, with all the children that have been given to us."

Leonard came around to Lyndell and laid his hand affectionately on her shoulder.

"O Dell," and there was a depth of emotion in his tone, "do you never regret your wedding gift to Tessy and myself? Every year it grows in sacredness to me, every year it seems more heroic in you. For you have sons—you were a Sherburne ——"

"And my sons might not care for it. Then my heart would be indeed broken. And while Randolph enjoyed his summer wonderfully, I can see that he is longing for the fray and the struggle that breaks from the very soul of active life. He would find those leisurely aspects irksome. Even Bertram, proud as he is of Doctor Underwood's work, would not be happy doing it. O, I am afraid we are recreant to the Sherburne blood. And you know I have had a great deal more than that in the value of the coal mines. It is right that great-grandfather's wealth should be divided."

"I feel that you have given me the better part. No money could recompense me for the loss of it. And Sherburne *is* proud of the home of his ancestors."

Then he kissed her tenderly.

"None of my sisters are dearer than you, Lyndell," he said, with fervent emotion.

Bertram Carew asked her the same question that night, and she answered him with a kiss.

The autumn was one of magnificence, late and glowing. Indeed from the profusion of flowers it might have been early summer. Honeysuckle made all the air sweet, and roses lingered long in their second blooming. Ripened fruit lent its fragrance, and the skies of wonderful blue suggested June.

The Amorys returned home in time, and the Osbornes came on to redeem their daughter, they said, though Uncle Paul was loth to give her up. The three Stanwood sons, Archie with his sweet daughter, clerical Floyd with his family, and Uncle Win, who had added a baby to the circle. Millicent Drayton and Nora Mallory who seemed more like a sister than a daughter, and Dell with her growing flock, and the Baltimore uncle, aunt and cousins.

After that came the neighborhood, who were delighted to do honor to the new heir. At first he had been reluctant to give up his father's name, but it was a proud event to be chosen to carry on that of the old family, and his grandmother, with her tall and still erect figure and silvery hair, thought it the proudest day of her life. But she too echoed Leonard's sentiment.

"Lyndell," she said, in a voice tremulous with deep feeling, "I think none of my children are dearer than you."

They talked over the long gone days, the sadness, the joys and compensations of the past; the many sides that had interlaced with each other's lives, and the life that was going on into new beginnings with these young people looking eagerly forward to their day, though this evening they danced and laughed and jested with all lightheartedness.

It was Grandpapa Beaumanoir who made the great

speech of the evening and read the bit of legal paper in which the young man resigned his father's name, and was henceforth to be what he had been named twenty-one years before—Edward Lyndell Sherburne, to carry on the honorable name of an old family by the generosity of his well loved relative, Lyndell Sherburne Carew.

The young man moved all hearts by his manly and tender reply.

Doctor Carew responded. There were other speeches, a grand supper, and more dancing, a lovely, merry crowd of young folks, who would always remember the occasion.

One of the happiest was Tessy Beaumanoir. She and Dell recalled the afternoon of the play under the old tree, and how mysteriously their lives had blended together. She had not been a brilliant woman nor taken any high place in the world, she could not have written any learned treatise or settled the great questions of the day, but to-night she was a proud wife and mother, content to shine in her own path and thus irradiate the way of others.

The two who had touched her life so nearly were watching her with loving eyes.

“‘Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates,’” said Doctor Carew, turning to his wife.

And she with her harvest yet to garner glanced up and smiled.

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